Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية «الرأي»

2 killed in highway accident

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two people were killed and two others were injured in an accident involving four vehicles on the Queen Alia International Airport highway, the Civil Defence Department said. It identified the dead as Lutfi Omar Ahmad (40) and Khadijeh Ishak Abdul Hafiz (50) and the injured as Eid Ahmad Maghrabi and Salem Ibrahim Maghrabi, both of whom were admitted at the Al Bashir Hospital for treatment.. Eyewitnesses said the accident involved two large vehicles and two smaller cars. Several other vehicles narrowly escaped from the pile-up, they said.

27 Jordanians airlifted from Albania

AMMAN (J.T.) — Twenty-seven Jordanians were airlifted from Albania with the help of the Italian, Turkish, Greek and the United States governments, the acting minister of foreign affairs, Kamal Nasser, told the Cabinet on Saturday. Minister of Transport and acting Minister of Information Nasser Lawzi said the Council of Ministers, in its regular session, approved draft laws on the Investment Promotion Corporation, travel and tourism agents and the administrative system at the Ministry of Social Development. The Cabinet also approved the minutes of Jordanian-Finnish meetings which resulted in the write-off of 40 per cent of the Kingdom's JD4.4 million debts to the Finnish government and settling the rest with Jordanian exports of phosphates.

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King visits bereaved families, injured victims of Baqoura rampage today; talks with Netanyahu are also scheduled

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein will travel to Israel today to offer condolences to the families of the victims of a Jordanian soldier's shooting rampage on Thursday, a spokesperson for the International Press Office of the Royal Court said Saturday.

The King, who is scheduled to land at Ben-Gurion airport in Tel Aviv in the morning, will go to Bab Al Wad, Beit Shemesh, to meet the families of the seven Israeli schoolgirls killed by a deranged border guard, the official said.

The King will also visit a teacher and one of the five Israeli girls wounded in the incident and hospitalised in Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital.

In the same hospital, the King will also visit Israeli President Ezer Weizman, who broke his left wrist and leg, tripping while stepping out of a helicopter on Friday.

In the one-day visit, the King is expected to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and to hold a joint press conference with the Likud premier, the official told the Jordan Times.

The Israeli Radio said the visit was agreed in a telephone conversation on Friday between King Hussein and Mr. Natanyahu.

King Hussein had expressed his intention to pay his condolences to the families of the victims in a message to Mr. Netanyahu, shortly after the incident.

"I conveyed an expression of my humane feelings, my deep sorrow and regret about what happened," he had told a press conference on Thursday night, upon his return home from Madrid, after cutting short a visit to Spain and the U.S.

"Also I expressed my hope if it were at all possible I would like to visit the families of the bereaved," he had said.

"I cannot offer enough condolences or express enough sorrow to the mothers and fathers of these children who fell today," the King added.

He said the shooting was "... a crime which I feel has been aimed at me, at the members of the armed forces of Jordan and the people of Jordan, as much as it was aimed at the young victims of this vile act."

The deranged soldier who opened fire at about 80 12 and 13-year-old Israeli girls on a school trip to the Baqoura area, in the northern Jordan Valley, was identified by Jordanian authorities as Ahmad Mousa Dakamseh, 27.

(Continued on page 7)

King visits attack site, chairs talks at army HQ

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein, accompanied by Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Prince Ali and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai, on Saturday visited the site of Thursday's attack at Baqoura.

The King also called at the General Headquarters of the Armed Forces where he chaired a meeting of senior officers of the Armed Forces.

Mohammad Rasoul Keilani, who was asked by the King on Friday to head the investigations into the attack, also accompanied the King.

Cabinet denounces Baqoura attack as an individual criminal act, urges all parties to abide by agreements

THE CABINET on Saturday condemned Thursday's attack at Baqoura as an individual criminal act and called on all concerned parties to continue concerted efforts to reach comprehensive peace in the region.

The Council of Ministers also issued a statement praising the role of the Hashemite leadership in making peace and safeguarding the achievements of peace.

Minister of Transport and acting Minister of Information Nasser Lawzi said the Cabinet, in its regular session on Saturday, reviewed Thursday's attack in which seven Israeli schoolgirls were killed and several others were wounded.

"The Council of Ministers condemns the attack as an individual criminal act and asks for concerted efforts to reach peace on all tracks," said Mr. Lawzi.

The Cabinet called the concerned parties "to adhere to responsible dialogue and show commitment to the international agreements signed in this regard," he added.

The Council of Ministers also "urged all peace-seekers to shoulder their responsibilities to achieve a just durable and comprehensive peace in the region."

The Cabinet expressed its "satisfaction over His Majesty King Hussein's efforts and his directives to form a specialised committee to investigate Thursday's attack and to disclose all facts and motives behind this crime."

"We should pursue efforts to found a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East that guarantees the rights of the concerned parties in the region," but "such an individual act should be taken into consideration when addressing the context of the Middle East peace."

The Jordan Bar Association said meanwhile it was forming a team of lawyers to defend Ahmad Dakamseh, the soldier who carried out the attack. Hussein Mjalli, the JBA president, also said Dakamseh should be "tried in an open court to ensure justice."

King condoles Iran

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday sent a cable to Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani condoling him in his name and on behalf of the Jordanian government and people over the death of 86 persons in a plane crash. King Hussein expressed his deep sorrow for the families of the dead.

Appointments approved

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein issued a Royal Decree ratifying the Cabinet's approval of appointing Yassin Istanbuli as Jordan's ambassador to Pakistan and as Jordan's non-resident ambassador to Bangladesh. Also issued was another Royal Decree appointing Fuad Bataineh as Jordan's ambassador to Yemen. Another Royal Decree approved the transfer of Mohammad Qudah to the Foreign Ministry in Amman.

Sudanese army says it recovers town

KHARTOUM (R) — The Sudanese Army said on Saturday it had recaptured the small town of Boing from the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Boing lies 100 kilometres southwest of the border town of Kurmuk, which the SPLA captured in January in an offensive along the Sudanese-Ethiopian border. But the SPLA had not mentioned Boing among its gains and the army spokesman in Khartoum, General Mohammad Al Sanoussi Ahmad, did not say when the army took it back (see earlier story on page 12).

Iraq accuses U.N. of double dealing

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Baghdad on Saturday accused the United Nations of double dealing in delaying vital supplies to the Iraqi people while it hands out hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation to Gulf war victims. "The United Nations has been prompt in compensating the victims of the Gulf war but tardy in implementing the oil-for-food accord," government newspaper Al Jumhouriya said in an open letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. Under U.N. Resolution 986, Iraq was allowed to resume limited oil exports in December to finance imports of food and medicine under strict U.N. supervision. But the imports have yet to materialise, with almost 200 contracts awaiting U.N. approval three months after the deal came into force in December. On Wednesday a U.N. committee agreed to pay out $144 million to almost 60,000 victims claiming damages from the Gulf war in the first disbursement under the oil-for-food deal. "Are there two organisations within the United Nations — one bone idle and negligent which deals with Iraq, and another, very dynamic and competent, which deals with those who seek" compensation, Al Jumhouriya asked. Mr. Annan earlier this week expressed "strong concerns" about the delays in distributing food and medicines under oil-for-food deal.

Its the Final Count Down
for the
Grand Opening
of
Y?ST?RDA?S
Theme Restaurant & Bar

Arafat appeals for world help to save peace process

Combined agency dispatches

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat said on Saturday a meeting of Middle East peace sponsors had helped protect regional peacemaking threatened by Israeli settlement plans for Jerusalem.

But he gave few details of how the three-hour-long conference, which Israel dismissed as a stunt to grab world attention, had achieved this.

Mr. Arafat urged the meeting to stop Israel from building in Arab East Jerusalem and to "save the peace process."

Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's actions mean "we no longer have a partner," Mr. Arafat told envoys from the United States, Russia, Japan, the European Union, Norway, Jordan and Egypt.

"The reason for this meeting is to save the peace process and return it to its normal track."

Mr. Arafat called the meeting to protest Mr. Netanyahu's plan to build a new Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem and the size of Israel's next planned withdrawal from the West Bank.

The four-hour meeting ended with assurances of support from the diplomats — but few promises of action.

Edward G. Abington, the U.S. consul general to Jerusalem, said the diplomats had agreed that plans for the new settlement of "Har Homa" were raising tensions in the region, and that "each government would conduct intensive efforts to lower the tension and restore confidence."

The United States and the other participants will continue to express their concerns with Israel. Mr.

(Continued on page 7)

Israeli army raids Palestinian youth office in West Bank

THE ISRAELI ARMY has raided a Palestinian youth club in the West Bank village of Beit Hanina, a Palestinian official said Saturday.

Israeli soldiers raided the club late Friday, said the Palestinian official who requested anonymity. He said it was not immediately clear what the Israeli troops were looking for.

Beit Hanina is located near the West Bank city of Ramallah in an area where the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has civilian control but the Israeli army oversees security.

An Israeli army spokesman declined to comment on the claim that the Palestinian youth club had been raided.

Israeli army radio reported earlier Saturday that the Israeli authorities had ordered the closure of a Palestinian youth and sports office in Arab East Jerusalem.

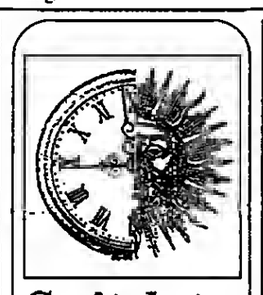
An Israeli police spokeswoman said, however, that Israel had not closed any such office in Arab East Jerusalem and the report was also denied by a spokesman for the Palestinian headquarters in Arab East Jerusalem.

On Wednesday, the Israeli government moved to calm a crisis with the Palestinians by cancelling an order closing four Palestinian offices in Arab East Jerusalem.

The targetted offices were a welfare organisation helping Palestinians hurt by Israeli security forces, an Islamic committee against Israeli settlements, a small business development office and a non-governmental organisation connected to the Fateh faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Israel claims the 1995 Oslo interim agreement on Palestinian autonomy limits PNA activities to self-rule areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and bars the self-rule government from operating in Arab East Jerusalem.

Israel's move against the offices stoked anger among Palestinians who were already enraged by a decision to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.



Switch to summer time on April 4

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan will switch to summer time on Friday April 4, 1997, a statement issued by the Prime Ministry said Saturday.

Clocks will be moved forward by 60 minutes on April 4 to run at three hours ahead of Greenwich Meantime (GMT).

The switch, adopted for the past 12 years, is aimed at conserving energy by making use of an hour of sunlight which otherwise would be wasted.

According to a study by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, switching to summer time saves the Kingdom fuel worth JD 327,000 each year.

Switching back the clocks comes in October, when, technically, winter season starts in the Kingdom.

Parliament session ends March 19; extraordinary meeting is unlikely

By Tareq Momani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday issued a Royal Decree terminating the present session of Parliament as of March 19, 1997.

Parliament sources ruled out the prospects of convening Parliament for an extraordinary session in the summer.

"No extraordinary session has ever been convened following the termination of the last session of Parliament," said one source. The reason for not having such a session, said the source, was concern that it could be "exploited for electioneering" by deputies seeking reelection.

The opposition bloc in the Lower House says it plans to collect signatures on a petition calling for an extraordinary session, stressing that there is need for such session so that Parliament can keep itself abreast of developments and will be able to finalise debates of draft laws.

According to the Constitution, the King can call Parliament for an extraordinary session for a limited period of time to debate a fixed list of topics as cited in a Royal Decree.

The Constitution also says an extraordinary session can be held if Parliament's absolute majority — half the number of the Lower House plus one that is 41 deputies — request that session through a petition which should define the topics that need to be debated.

Once elected, Parliament holds four ordinary sessions, each lasting four months in addition to three extraordinary sessions with a two-month duration each.

"It is very difficult for the 22-member opposition bloc to collect signatures of 41 deputies for the extraordinary session because such a session would be exploited by the deputies for electioneering purposes. Furthermore other blocs are represented in the government

(Continued on page 7)

Israeli signatories of Copenhagen Declaration criticise Netanyahu

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Israeli members of the steering committee of the International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace have criticised their government's decision to build new Jewish "quarters" in East Jerusalem and called for reversing the decision.

"The decisions taken (by the government) not only run counter to creating an atmosphere of amity of negotiations but they undermine the positive climate that was created after agreement was attained on the Hebron issue," they said in an advertisement that appeared in the Jerusalem Post Friday.

They warned that the decisions taken by the government of hardline Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu "could endanger the whole future of the peace process."

They urged the Israeli government "not to take any action that could endanger the peace process which is of such importance to us all."

They reiterated their commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration which was signed in January by Jordanian, Palestinian, Israeli, Egyptian and Danish politicians, intellectuals and peace activists.

In the declaration, participants stressed that "to allay Palestinian fears, no new settlements should be built, and no new Palestinian land, state or private, will be expropriated."

"The International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace will spare no effort to establish genuine Arab-Israeli relations based on respect for our mutual concern and the dignity and security of our people," they said.

"Jerusalem should be the centre for building mutual confidence; the decisions taken with regard to building new quarters in East Jerusalem, and especially the manner in which they were taken and their timing, have had the opposite result and therefore should not be implemented."

The Israeli members of the Alliance's steering committee are Shlomo Ben Ami, a Labour member of the Knesset, and David Kimche, a former director general of the foreign ministry.

U.S. finds limited options in effort to resume Israeli-Palestinian talks

By Lamis Andoni
Special to the Jordan Times

BOSTON — The American administration, alarmed by the potential flare of violence in the Middle East, is seeking to get the Israelis and Palestinians back on the negotiating table.

However, American officials strongly suggested, in interviews over the past few days, that Washington was not ready to take any step that will be seen as an endorsement of the Arab identity of East Jerusalem, or reverse its support for an Israeli unilateral determination of the scope of its further redeployments.

The interviews also suggest that the U.S. will press for a freeze of constructions of housing units in Jabal Abu Ghneim, for opening Gaza sea and air ports and facilitating Palestinian officials' entry into Arab East Jerusalem.

The U.S., as the interviews indicated, has been relying on the Arab stand, particularly that of Jordan, to prompt Israel to reconsider its decision.

American administration officials, have been hopeful that the strong worded-message by His Majesty King Hussein to Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu would prompt the Israeli leader to reconsider the move to build settlements in Arab East Jerusalem.

According to American administration officials, King Hussein's words have always been taken seriously by the Israeli leadership. In fact administration officials saw the King's messages, as they told this reporter, as an important element complementing the American efforts to place the peace process back on track. However, the tragic shooting by a Jordanian soldier of seven Israeli schoolgirls on Thursday has renewed concern in Washington of a potential eruption of violence, especially that Israel is determined to pursue its plans in Arab East Jerusalem.

What the American administration is willing to do, based on interviews with officials, seems so far very limited. "During the Hebron talks we had an agreement (the interim agreement) to work with as a basis... the situation is different, there is no agreement to go back to," one administration source said referring to the fact that Arab East Jerusalem and Jewish settlements were put off by the Oslo accords to the final status negotiations.

What Washington is not willing to do, however, is clear. The administration will not go as far as questioning the legality of the Israeli step or its claim to Arab East Jerusalem. That was mainly expressed by the American veto against the United Nations Security Council resolution calling on Israel to halt the buildings in Jabal Abu Ghneim. The U.S. also voted against a similar resolution at the General Assembly.

Interviews with administration officials suggest that Washington would like Israel to cancel or at least freeze its planned construction. But what the U.S. stand is bound to alarm the Palestinians and Arabs in general.

The well-placed officials told Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times that the main reason that the U.S. was against both United Nations resolutions was because they referred to Arab East Jerusalem as part "of the occupied territories."

"We are not going to allow any resolutions that refers to East Jerusalem as occupied territories. This will prejudge the outcome of the negotiations," an American official source said.

When asked if that meant that the U.S. does not recognise East Jerusalem as occupied territory the source said the Oslo accords had kept East Jerusalem out of the agreements regarding the occupied territories and stipulated that its status would be decided later.

He said that any resolution that refer to Arab East Jerusalem as occupied territory is as bad as the Israeli decision to build housing units in Jabal Abu Ghneim. "They both prejudge the outcome of the negotiations," he said.

The American position, in effect, undercuts the Palestinian and Arab negotiating

(Continued on page 7)

British minister: My heart goes out to King Hussein

3 major British parties agree on Mideast policy

AMMAN (J.T.) — Representatives of the three main British political parties, the Conservatives, Labour, and Liberal Democrats, all expressed their sadness by Thursday's shooting of Israeli schoolgirls at Buqoura, the northern Jordanian-Israeli border, saying "every life lost in the Middle East was a life lost too many."

These statements were made at a special meeting in London held to address "Britain and the Middle East after the Election" organised by the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) and the Arab Club of Great Britain on Thursday.

Speaking for the ruling Conservative Party, Jeremy Hanley MP, British minister of state for foreign affairs (Middle East and Asia), said that his heart went out to His Majesty King Hussein in the tragedy of Thursday's shooting. He commended the King's brave steps towards peace in the region and hoped that Jordanians would soon feel the fruits of peace despite such "one-off" incidents.

The three parties revealed that British policy towards the Middle East was possibly the only policy they unanimously agreed on. The only way peace could be achieved, they suggested, was through dialogue between the parties involved. They stressed that the international community must offer encouragement, hope, and goodwill to ensure that dialogue continues despite tensions.

Derek Fatchett (Labour MP) shadow minister of state for foreign affairs, who will be visiting Jordan next week, said that the recent Hebron deal and the subsequent redeployment of Israeli troops showed that the Israeli government was committed to continuing the path of peace adopted by the previous Labour government.

Commenting on British policy towards the peace process, the three speakers said that Britain staunchly believed in and abided by the principle of land for peace and U.N. resolutions on Arab East Jerusalem. They also agreed that there could be no long-term comprehensive peace without Syria and stressed that Britain and European Union (EU) should try their best to encourage the resumption of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations. The speakers added that Lebanon had an inalienable right in recovering its territories from Israel.

They commended the role played by the EU special envoy to the peace talks Miuel Moratinos, a role they described as "a remarkable achievement." The speakers expressed their hope that Israel would cooperate with the EU special envoy, particularly in his efforts to conduct a study on the state of the Palestinian economy. They hoped that the EU and the Palestinian National Authority would sign a trade agreement in the near future, stressing that unless the people felt the positive outcomes of peace, there could be no stability in the region.

When asked about their positions regarding the building of the Israeli settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, the speakers said that they believed, as under the Fourth Geneva Convention, that settlements were illegal in land under occupation and certainly not in accordance with the Oslo Agreement and international agreements. They added that the building of settlements was grounds for instability and violence.

The three parties were also in agreement on the British position on other issues in the Middle East. Regarding Iraq, the parties agreed that the position of Britain and the international community was not actually against the Iraqi people, nor against Iraq's sovereignty and integrity, but rather against its ruler. They warned that Iraq still had chemical and mass-destruction weaponry and therefore remained a threat. So did Iran, which Mr. Hanley described as "the biggest threat in the region."

The representative of the Liberal Democrats Party, Menzies Campbell MP — a lawyer in Scotland by profession — called on Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi to hand over the suspects in the Lockerbie bombing, assuring him that they would "definitely" get a fair trial in Scotland. Unless these suspects were handed over, the representatives agreed, relations between Britain and Libya could not improve.

Stability was vital in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, the three party spokespersons stated, and commended the progress, though at times "painfully slow," and reform on the political, economic, and social levels that the GCC states had achieved in their path to democracy.

The parties also stressed that Britain would continue to stand by its efforts to ensure respect of human rights and democracy. Mr. Campbell said that in the EU trade agreements with other countries, there was a clear clause stating that the signing country must respect human rights and must abide by international law, any violation of which would lead to the suspension of the agreement.

"This British government's policy towards the Middle East cannot be opposed because it is the only just truth," concluded Mr. Hanley. The next British government is expected to continue to support the peace process because it believes that "peace would breed prosperity and prosperity peace."

SOLIDARITY DAY: Lebanese schoolchildren visit a painting exhibition at the Lebanese parliament hall in Beirut on the occasion of the 14 March Solidarity Day with South Lebanon. Solidarity Day in Lebanon marks the Israeli invasion of the country on the same day in 1978 and related events continue until March 18 (AFP photo)

Tehran offers to cooperate with Saudis on pilgrimage

TEHRAN (AFP) — President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani called Saturday for Iran and Saudi Arabia to overcome their differences and forge cooperation on the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

"Cooperation could revive this grand force in the Islamic World," Mr. Rafsanjani said on state radio, as Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati headed for Saudi Arabia on a trip aimed a mending troubled ties between the two countries.

Mr. Rafsanjani urged more "favorable conditions" in tune with a "true pilgrimage in conformity with Koranic precepts" between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The president stopped short of explicitly calling for an anti-U.S. and anti-Israeli demonstration in Mecca during the pilgrimage.

But he was apparently asking the Saudis to be more forthcoming with Iranian desires to stage such political demonstrations, which Riyadh has strictly banned.

Mr. Velayati was due to arrive Saturday in Saudi Arabia, on his first visit there in four years, to deliver an invitation for King Fahd to attend a regular summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tehran in December.

The head of Iran's pilgrimage affairs, Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, criticised Saudi Arabia on Friday for seeking to prevent Iranian pilgrims from holding the "disavowal of pagans" rallies in Mecca and Medina.

Saudi Arabia, preparing to welcome up to two million visitors for the annual pilgrimage has warned the faithful against bringing in any political material.

Such demonstrations have previously led to tense situations and even bloody confrontations with Saudi security forces.

In 1987, more than 400 people were killed in clashes between Iranian demonstrators and Saudi forces, leading to a break in diplomatic relations which lasted until 1991.

Despite their criticism, Iranian leaders have been seeking to improve ties with the kingdom, which Tehran accuses of subscribing to an "American brand of Islam" at odds with Iran's revolutionary ideology.

Kuwaiti police step in to end newspapers' feud on rights

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwaiti police have intervened to stop the circulation of one of two newspapers published here under the same masthead, officials said on Saturday.

Police and security forces surrounded on Wednesday night the offices of Al Rai Al Aam, published by Abdul Aziz Al Musaid, to stop the daily being distributed, the English-language Arab Times reported.

An official from the Interior Ministry said a court issued a ruling last month to "prevent the printing and distribution" of Mr. Musaid's version of Al Rai Al Aam.

But the publisher defied the ruling and continued to issue the paper so the courts "directed the ministry of interior to take action," said the official, who asked not to be named.

A second version of Al Rai Al Aam is continuing to be published and distributed by Jassem Al Boodai, chairman of publishing house Dar Al Jazira, who bought the title from Mr. Musaid in a deal struck in 1994.

Mr. Musaid began proceedings in the courts in 1995 to have the contract annulled, and while the legal wrangle continued both publishers started issuing rival versions of the daily in very different styles in may 1996.

Both versions were still appearing on the newsstands until Wednesday, but since then only Mr. Boodai's version of Al Rai Al Aam, which is the oldest masthead in Kuwait, has been circulated.

The Arab Times said Mr. Musaid could still appeal against last month's ruling by the courts.

NEWS IN BEIEF

Bahrain continues trial of coup suspects

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain's state security court on Saturday continued the trial of 81 people accused of involvement in an alleged Iranian-backed plot to topple Bahrain's government, lawyers said. The trial of the suspects — 59 in court and the rest tried in absentia — began on March 1. The trial was halted on Thursday and Friday. Lawyers said some verdicts could be passed in the next week and some suspects could face the death penalty. The defendants are accused of joining the military wing of the Bahraini Hizbollah (Party of God), creating an organisation aimed at toppling the government, possessing weapons without permission and contacting a foreign country. Political parties are banned in Bahrain. Bahraio in June accused Shi'ite Muslim Iran of backing an attempt to overthrow the government. Iran denied the allegation. Members of the island's majority Shi'ite Muslim community seeking political and economic reform by the Sunni rulers have waged a campaign of bombings, arson, sabotage and riots since December 1994. At least 28 people bave been killed and hundreds arrested.

Indonesia starts sending pilgrims

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, started a major airlift on Saturday to send 200,000 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for the annual Hajj, airline and airport officials said. "We have started sending the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia. One flight from Jakarta Halim Perdana Kusuma airport has taken off," an airport official told Reuters. An official from the state airline Garuda, which transported the pilgrims, said there would be a total of 474 flights originating from six cities in Indonesia to send the people to Saudi Arabia. He said the airlifts would continue until April 10 and the pilgrims would start to fly back to Indonesia on April 22. The official said Garuda would use 24 wide-bodied aircraft to transport the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

Israel to free key figure in scandal

TEL AVIV (AP) — A senior Israeli air force officer sentenced in an embezzlement scandal involving U.S. defence contracts will be released early due to poor health, the Israeli army said Friday. Brigadier General Rami Dotan will be released on April 21 after serving half of his 13-year prison sentence, according to a statement from the army spokesman's office. Mr. Dotan was one of three defendants charged with diverting millions of dollars between 1984 and 1990 from contracts with General Electric for jet engine improvement work in Israel. The contracts were financed by the U.S. military. In 1991, Mr. Dotan was convicted of embezzling $10 million paid by the U.S. Government for work never done. The decision to release Mr. Dotan early came after a military court established that in light of his illness continued imprisonment posed a danger to his life. Further details were not given.

Iran too late to participate in UAE show

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has rejected Iran's request to participate in an international arms show opening on Sunday because it missed the deadline, organisers said on Saturday. But a high-ranking Iranian military delegation will visit the international defence exhibition (IDEX-97) along with more than 50,000 military delegates invited for the five-day event. Brigadier Sultan Al Suweidi said. Brig. Suweidi told a news conference the refusal of Iran's request had nothing to do with its island dispute with the UAE. "Iran is not participating in IDEX this time because it decided to take part very late. It was past the deadline," he said.

Fateh official escapes assassination attempt

SIDON, Lebanon (AFP) — An official in Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fateh movement survived an assassination attempt overnight which left his wife and bodyguard injured, security sources said Saturday. Unidentified gunmen opened fire with machineguns late Friday on the car of Amine Kayed on a road leading to Sayroub, near the Ain Al Helweh Palestinian refugee camp located at the outskirts of the southern port of Sidon, they said. Mr. Kayed's wife and bodyguard were transported to hospital in Sidon. The extent of their injuries was not immediately known. Fateh officials in southern Lebanon accused agents of the Israeli intelligence service Mossad of carrying out the attack.

Canada detains Saudi wanted in Al Khobar bombing

OTTAWA (R) — Canada has detained a Saudi man who claimed he was being sought in connection with a truck bomb blast in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 U.S. soldiers last year, a Canadian official said on Friday.

The man, Fahad Al Shehri, sought refugee status in Canada and said he was part of a "Mujahideen (holy warriors)" group though he denied involvement in the bombings, citizenship and immigration spokeswoman Joanne John told Reuters.

"He was claiming refugee status because he claimed to be wanted in Saudi Arabia in connection with the bombings and for being a member of the Mujahideen, but he denied any involvement in the bombings himself," Ms. John said.

He did not say the group was involved either, she said.

It appeared unlikely, however, that he would be sent back to Saudi Arabia lest he face capital punishment, a penalty Canada has banned.

The truck bomb last June at a military housing complex near the Saudi oil city of Dhahran killed 19 U.S. airmen and injured about 400 people. A car bomb in 1995 killed five U.S. troops and two Indians in the capital Riyadh.

Mr. Shehri applied to be a refugee on his arrival at Ottawa airport on Dec. 6, and was arrested and detained by Canadian immigration officials three days later, Ms. John said.

The grounds were that he gave reason to believe that he was a member of a terrorist group and "could pose a danger to the Canadian public," she added.

An inquiry into whether to grant him refugee status opened on March 3 but was adjourned for procedural reasons until March 26.

Ms. John said a person can be deemed to be a danger and deported either to his home country or another, but there were other considerations, including what risk going back home posed for an individual.

She said Canada generally would not deport a person to a country where he would face the death penalty. Last May Saudi Arabia beheaded four of its citizens who confessed on state television that they were behind the 1995 explosion.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
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PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 ....Cartoon — Jonny Quest
14:30 Cartoon — Problem Child
15:00 ....French Programmes
16:00 .... Doc. — Global Family
16:25 ....Energy Express
16:50 Doc — Our World, Their World
17:15 ..... All Our Children
18:00 .....French Programmes
19:30 ....News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 ....Doc. — World Echo
20:30 Medical Drama — Side Effects
21:10 .....Doc. — Tycoons
22:00 .....News in English
22:25 ....Hot Shots
23:00 ....Sisters

PRAYER TIMES

04:24.....Fajr
05:41 .....(Sunrise) Duha
11:44.....Dhuhr
15:09.....'Asr
17:47.....Maghreb
19:04.....'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunication Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654032.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Cathulics Parish Tel. 614198).

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to rise slightly with a chance of scattered showers. It will be relatively cold, skies partly cloudy, and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers, winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman.....06/12
Aqaba.....11/21
Deserts.....04/15
Jordan Valley.....09/19

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 10, Aqaba 21. Humidity readings: Amman 90 per cent, Aqaba 41 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Wafiq Qaddoumi 892542
Dr. Khalil Al Tusluq 757252
Dr. Bahjat Bader 832642
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 830432
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 775336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Naroukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Tareq Hijjawi 985445
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police.....192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade.....617101
Blood Bank.....775121
Highway Police.....843402
Traffic Police.....896390
Public Security Dept.....630321
Hotel Complaints.....605800
Price Complaints.....661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints ...897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs.....661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co.....636381
RJ Flight Information ..08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity.....644281/6
Akileh Maternity.....642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity ...642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir.....775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital ...602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital .....(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital .....(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital.....(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital .....(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital .....(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital .....(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital .....(02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08 (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:15 .....Bombay (RJ)
08:35 .....Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 .....Larnaca (RJ)
09:15 .....Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:50 .....Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 .....Beirut (RJ)
10:15 .....Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
15:15 .....Brussels (add) (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:05 ..... Paris (RJ)
17:45 .....Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
17:45 .....London (RJ)
18:10 .....Athens (RJ)
18:40 .....Frankfurt (RJ)
19:15 .....Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
19:30 .....Tunis (RJ)
19:35 .....Vienna (RJ)
19:40 .....Rome (RJ)
22:25 ..... Marrakesh (add) (RJ)
00:40 .....Cairo (RJ)
01:59 .....Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
06:20 .....Tel Aviv (LY)
12:40 .....Bahrain (GF)
15:00 .....Doha (Q7)
15:20 .....Moscow (SU)
20:10 .....Beirut (ME)
20:30 .....Cairo (MS)
23:10 .....Istanbul (TK)
23:50 .....London, Beirut (BA)
01:25 ....Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
09:20 .....Aqaba (RW)
18:55 .....Tel Aviv (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20.....Beirut (RJ)
08:40 .....Frankfurt (RJ)
10:00 .....Marrakesh (add) (RJ)
11:00.....Tunis (RJ)
11:05 .....Vienna (RJ)
11:15.....Rome (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15 .....London (RJ)
12:20 .....Athens (RJ)
17:00 .....Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
20:30 .....New Delhi (RJ)
20:30 .....Jeddah (RJ)
20:40 .....Damascus (RJ)
21:00 .....Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
22:10 .....Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:45 .....Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 .....Sanaa (RJ)
23:30 .....Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
06:30 .....London (KJ)
07:00 .....Beirut (ME)
07:15 .....Tel Aviv (LY)
07:35 ....Damascus, London (BA)
16:15 .....Doha (Q7)
16:35 .....Moscow (SU)
21:25.....Cairo (MS)
02:30 .....Amsterdam (KL)
06:00 .....Istanbul (TK)

Royal Wing (RW) Flights
09:50 Aqaba (RW) (departing from Marka Airport)
20:30 .....Aqaba (RW)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman ....8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus ....5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus ....7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman .....5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/500
Banana	600/600
Banana (imported)	1000/900
Cabbage	120/50
Carrot	230/180
Cauliflower	200/120
Cucumber (large)	250/140
Cucumber (small)	340/200
Eggplant	240/120
Fava beans	600/300
Garlic	1300/900
Grape fruit	180/120
Lemon	380/250
Marrow (large)	250/120
Marrow (small)	440/260
Onion (green)	220/120
Onion (dry)	300/200
Orange	440/300
Peas	900/600
Pepper (hot)	440/250
Pepper (sweet)	420/220
Potato	330/200
Radish	140/50
Spinach	250/200
String beans	950/600
Tomato	380/220

Islamists split in JPA elections

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Islamists at the Jordan Pharmacist Association are divided as two independent Islamists intend to run for the presidency seat in upcoming elections, scheduled to take place in April.

The Islamic movement at the JPA, represented by the Muslim Brotherhood on one side and independent Islamists on the other, has reportedly failed to reconcile and coordinate its stand.

Therefore, two Islamists — incumbent president Abdul Rahim Issa, backed by the brotherhood, and Abdul Rahim Maaya, a current member of the council and backed by independent Islamists, have decided to run against each other.

Originally, the Muslim Brotherhood had decided on Ziad Abu Hummous as their candidate and refrained from supporting traditional candidates Mr. Issa and Mr. Maaya.

However, in a "surprising" move, Mr. Abu Hummous withdrew his candidacy in favour of Mr. Issa.

"The action came as a surprise to me," Mr. Maaya, who had left the meeting before the withdrawal took place, told the Jordan Times.

He explained that be and his supporters, which include former Islamist President of the JPA, Hussam Adeen Musmar, had already stormed out of the meeting when the decision was taken.

He stated that certain Islamists had independently decided to impose a three-member committee, responsible for nominating the presidential candidate, upon the rest of the group.

Subsequent to Mr. Maaya and his colleagues' exit, only 14 people, out of the original 24, remained at the meeting.

"The meeting was not representative as only 24 people attended and, furthermore, we rejected a three-member committee to decide on one candidate," he said.

In last week's meeting, Mr. Musmar suggested that at least 100 people nominate an Islamist candidate.

He affirmed that he based his argument on the association's membership reaching around 4,000 persons currently and continually increasing.

To achieve democracy, an increased number of pharmacists should be included in the debate, Mr. Musmar opined.

"We disagreed with the other party (the Muslim Brotherhood) and left the meeting, but were not informed of the decision until the next morning," he added.

Both presidential candidates are currently conducting negotiations with other association members, slated to be competing for council seats, to include them on their lists.

The JPA is also currently conducting negotiations with the government to eliminate tedious procedures involved in the JPA elections for president and the ten-seat council.

The current JPA law, which some pharmacists have described as "backward," was issued in 1972.

It stipulates that members of the assembly should first elect the president of the association and then, when all votes are processed and the result announced, the second stage of the elections begins.

Pharmacists at the association complain that electoral procedures are time-consuming and they assert their right to be treated on an equal basis with other professional associations.

In other associations, two separate ballots are filled — one for a presidential candidate and one for council members.

However, according to an informed source, it is unlikely that a permanent association electoral law could be passed before the April elections.

Mr. Maaya differed, saying that a temporary election law may well be approved.

According to the Constitution, the various associations' internal laws must be ratified by Royal Decree.

To rectify the JPA election law, the executive authority should present an amendment to the Lower House where, if approved, the amended law would be passed on to the Senate and in the final stage a Royal Decree is issued.

Pharmacists, in the 4,000-strong assembly, are also demanding the right to vote in different governorates, as other associations presently do, instead of having to make a bi-annual trip to Amman.

Islamists as a united movement have been in virtual control of the association for the past nine years, when Mr. Musmar was the first Islamist elected as president of the JPA.

He served two consecutive terms.

Nominations, which opened on March 13, will close on April 4.

Prosecution calls for full conviction of journalists in lese majeste case

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Military Prosecutor Ahmad Harran Saturday asked the State Security Court Saturday for the full conviction of journalists Nahed Hattar and Abdullah Abu Ruman, both charged with lese majeste.

Mr. Hattar, 37, is accused of distributing articles, slandering both His Majesty King Hussein, and HRH Crown Prince Hassan, while Mr. Abu Ruman, 23, is charged with verbal slander.

In his 13-page closing statement, Prosecutor Harran maintained that Mr. Hattar indirectly slandered the King in the majority of his published and unpublished articles.

"Mr. Hattar used the word regime in his editorials, and [regardless of] whatever [terminology] he used in his articles, it is obvious that he was referring to the King," Prosecutor Harran said.

The prosecution charged in its closing statement that Mr. Hattar was receiving payment from outside of the Kingdom.

"[He is] an intelligent person, and the only explanation for [his] articles which slander the King and attack the regime, is that [he is] being paid from outside the country," Prosecutor Harran said.

Further, he stated that Mr. Hattar accused Arab countries, including Jordan, of treason.

In referring to some of the articles seized at Mr. Hattar's office, the prosecution described one as calling for the transfer of the King's responsibilities, as stipulated in the Constitution, to legislative, judicial, and executive authorities.

"The defendant also called for appointing Prince Hassan as provisional prime minister, for a transitional period of six months, after which time elections would be convened to elect a prime minister," the prosecution said.

The military prosecutor said the reason Mr. Hattar had not previously been called to stand trial for "slanderous" articles written during the past two years, was to afford him a second chance.

"The reason we did not prosecute you during the past two years was to give you a chance to amend your writings," Prosecutor Harran stated.

The charges against the two specifically stem from articles they allegedly wrote during and after unrest in the south in mid-August, following a government decision to increase bread prices.

The military tribunal, headed by Justices Yousef Faouri, Aref Syouf and Salem Saudi, postponed the case until Mar. 30 to hear the defence team's closing arguments.

Both defendants could stand trial in civil courts on charges of propagating material which harms national unity and relations between Jordan and Palestine, sows sectarianism and ethnicism, instigates violence, terror and hatred, and undermines national unity.

Senators condemn attack on Israeli schoolgirls

AMMAN (Petra) — Senators Saturday condemned Thursday's attack on seven Israeli schoolgirls at Baqoura by a Jordanian soldier.

Meeting under the chairmanship of Speaker Ahmad Lawzi and attended by Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, the Senate denounced the attack as criminal.

Senator Natheer Rashid described the shooting as causing pain in the hearts of the Jordanian people.

Mr. Rashid voiced support for His Majesty King Hussein's and the government's measures in containing the incident and in pursuing efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Senator Hamad Maaita described the attack as alien to the Jordanian Armed Forces and people.

Jordan rejects all forms of terrorist attacks on innocent civilians, he said.

Mr. Maaita called on Israeli leaders to learn from the incident and accelerate steps to establish a genuine and lasting peace.

This isolated incident will not affect the peace process, he added.

Senator Jawdat Sboul affirmed that there can be no alternative to a just and comprehensive peace, acceptable to all.

He stated that the incident should prompt all to work towards achieving peace.

Mr. Sboul reiterated the Senate's support for the King's earlier expression of dismay at Israeli hesitation to implement accords and peace treaties.

He demanded that Arab countries hold a summit to pass new decisions related to the situation in the occupied Arab territories in the light of Israeli actions there.

Meanwhile, the Dakamseh tribe of which Thursday's alleged gunman, Ahmad Dakamseh pertains, Saturday sent the King a cable condemning the shooting.

It was signed by 19 members of the tribe.

At the outset of the session, a Royal Decree announced the termination of the present session of Parliament as of March 19.

The Senate also approved three separate amendments as referred by the Lower House.

The first regarded a law on lawyers in Islamic courts, the second on the Jordanian Farmers Federation and the third pertained to Al al Bait University.

Authorities order removal, modification of certain billboards in the Kingdom

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In an effort to clean up the environment, authorities are ordering billboard owners to remove their signs from the roads and highways of the Kingdom.

The regulation has been adopted by various municipalities, including Amman, in an effort to standardise the size and shape of billboards, and to limit the areas in which they are placed.

"The new regulations are designed to keep our city beautiful, so that we do not have random advertisement material in the streets or affixed to buildings," Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi said.

He termed these advertisements as "visual pollution."

The new regulations, issued by the municipality in May of 1996, have restricted the size and shape of billboards which first appeared on the Kingdom's streets and highways in 1985.

"Since 1985, billboards have been randomly placed in different sizes and shapes on the streets, and our new regulations are aimed at organising the advertising process," Director of the Carcer and Advertising Department at the Amman Greater Municipality (AGM), Ziad Rihani said.

The new regulations, according to Mr. Rihani, stipulate that billboards contain neither photos of people nor cartoons and that script on the boards be Arabic.

The regulations also stipulate that billboards on buildings advertise products of companies, actually housed within the building. In addition, balloon and air advertisements are restricted, he said.

Mr. Rihani told the Jordan Times that the new regulations will result in the removal of all advertising signs on the Kingdom's highways as well as the 30-kilometre airport highway.

"In advanced countries, one does not see billboards scattered on the highways as it is known that billboards on highways distract drivers," Mr. Rihani contended.

According to Mayor Abbadi, the new regulations as well as the removal of the billboards will cost the municipality approximately JD 500,000 annually.

"These regulations are stringent on the municipality and billboard owners alike," he admitted. "But we must respect the visual environment."

The Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) and business community criticised the AGM decision in a letter sent by ACC President Haidar Murad to Dr. Abbadi, asking the municipality to reconsider its decision.

"The new decision will cost business owners and advertising companies huge losses in replacing the existing billboards with new façades," the letter said.

Mr. Murad also suggested that billboard owners be given a three-year grace period to allow enough time to meet the new specifications.

"Our petition is to continue using the existing billboards for a three-year period, which is sufficient time, to avoid huge losses," Mr. Murad told the Jordan Times.

An influential company in Jordan also complained of the cost to be borne, by removing said signs.

"It will cost our company and others almost JD 150 apiece to remove billboards from the city streets and highways," one of the company owners said.

According to billboard makers, the cost of constructing a billboard could reach JD 1,500.

They termed the new regulations as "complicated" and "strange."

"Many company owners have lost their confidence in us and the municipality because of the new decision," Ghazi Khatab stated.

He said that the decision slowed his business and that previous to the decision he employed 32 workers, but that the number has dropped to seven.

"The decision did not affect me financially," Mr. Khatab stated. "But what about employees who support their families and lost their jobs as a result of the decision?"

The municipality, according to Mr. Rihani, has amended one rule concerning the mechanical tri-vision and electronic billboards.

He said that, at first, the municipality asked tri-vision and electronic billboard owners to remove their signs, "but after several complaints from billboard owners we concluded that it would incur such a great expense, that we decided against removing them."

However, no new permits will be issued for such billboards.

"These kinds of billboards can distract drivers and cause many road accidents, and this is one of the reasons we have decided to discontinue the issuance of new licences," Mr. Rihani said.

One owner of a company which imports mechanical tri-vision billboards charged that the new rules were implemented without benefit of careful examination.

He maintained that he has already lost JD 90,000 as a result.

"This decision is a loss for Jordan, the municipality and billboard owners," he said.

Dr. Abbadi told the Jordan Times that the municipality plans to study these complaints further and implement any necessary modifications.

British group to coordinate with RSCN on integrated complex

AMMAN (J.T.) — The British Institute for Archaeology and History (BIAH) and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) have agreed to coordinate on the establishment of an integrated complex to serve as research centre and tourist camp at Wadi Faynan in the Dana Wildlife Reserve located in Tafileh Governorate.

The two organisations Saturday signed a cooperation agreement which first provides for the camp's creation and then to serve as a centre for environmental and archaeological research.

The camp will include a resthouse to be managed by the RSCN, as the agreement stipulates.

Excavations reveal ancient kingdom, said to be second only to Petra

According to the RSCN, the BIAH has, over the past three years, carried out excavations in Wadi Faynan and has uncovered perhaps the second most important archaeological site in southern Jordan after the ancient city of Petra.

The excavators, the society said, found the vestiges of an ancient kingdom, called the Faynan kingdom.

Tareq Abul Hawa, director of the Dana Wildlife Reserve which is run by the RSCN, said that the Wadi Faynan site lies within the Dana reserve zone and hence the agreement with the BIAH for bilateral cooperation.

He said that the ancient Faynan kingdom used to consist of a large residential complex, several churches and an ancient copper mine which flourished under the Byzantine era.

Mr. Abul Hawa stated that the Wadi Faynan area was once owned by the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) which set up installations in the early 1960s.

It was later turned over to the RSCN as a gift, Mr. Abul Hawa explained, adding that the RSCN is now in charge of the site within the Dana Wildlife Reserve.

He expected the complex to serve as a centre for researchers and scholars concerned with archaeology and the environment and will, he stated, be run by qualified personnel.

Mr. Abul Hawa expected the research centre and the tourist camp to attract not only scholars but also tourists from Jordan and abroad.

The 10-year agreement was signed by RSCN President Anis Muasher and BIAH Director in Amman Allison McQuith.

Mr. Muasher told the Jordan Times that work has already started on the initial stage of the project which is estimated to achieve completion in three months.

He said that the RSCN and the BIAH have both pledged JD 20,000 for this stage.

Seminar to address security in the region

By Sacha Baggili
Special to the Jordan Times.

AMMAN — A six-day international conference to discuss security concerns in the Middle East opens here today, hosting approximately 40 participants from the Middle East, Europe and the United States.

The event will constitute a comprehensive study of security-related issues in the Middle East, through the presentation of lectures from distinguished scientists and workers in the fields of security and strategic studies, both regionally and internationally.

The event is organised by the Jordanian Centre for Research on Arms Control and Security (CRACS), the Italian International School on Disarmament and Research on Conflicts (ISODARCO) and the U.S.-based University of Syracuse.

According to CRACS Director Ayman Khalil, this "pioneering" international meeting to discuss security concerns in the region is the first of its kind to be held in Jordan.

It is hoped that the conference will be the first of many, to be held once or twice each year, for the purpose of promoting a greater multilateral discussion about strategic arms and security concerns in the region.

Dr. Khalil explained that, although there will be participation from various international government officials, the meeting does not aim to generate commitments from discussions, but aims to initiate ongoing detailed research to enhance understanding of the region's security concerns from varying perspectives.

CRACS is a national non-governmental organisation (NGO), licensed by the Ministry of Interior in 1996, to research the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and assess the impact of various regional and international treaties on Jordan and the Middle East.

Some topics to be addressed include, "Iran's Concerns in the Regional Security Environment," "Economic Relations and Regional Security in the Middle East," "The Role of Religious Convictions in Violent Conflicts," "The Future of Nuclear Power in the Middle East," and the "Military Aspect of the Golan Heights Issue in the Israeli-Syrian Peace Process."

Internet café/bookshop to open in Amman

By Zeina Durra
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Hand-in-hand with the ever-expanding on-line world comes the emergence of more innovative ways to "surf the net."

The Internet café phenomenon has already hit the likes of London, Paris and New York and has recently caught on in the Middle East with similar cafés in Beirut, Dubai and Cairo.

Now Amman has its very own version, perhaps more ambitious than others in the region: Books@Cafe.

This notion sprangs from the ideas of two people, one desirous of a book-style café and the other, a coffee shop boasting the Internet. They merged the themes and produced a "new concept," as partner Sami Toukan described it.

The ground foor of the café comprises a bookshop selling both second-hand and new books, stocking everything from Descartes to Daniel Steel, landscape gardening to German dictionaries.

The range is varied and will further shift, according to pubic demand, he said. There is also a children's book section, a smaller Arabic une and in addition to books there is a gift shop which sells java-themed ceramic gifts and CDs.

The café is located on the second floor and has an area reserved for the six to ten computers which create a cyberspace influence. The primary idea being that anyone can rent the computers for one hour, a service which will set the user back from 14 to 15 dinars.

This gives those who do not generally have computer access the opportunity to browse "the web" and use the e-mail service, enabling the community to participate in the global village and information technology age.

The environment also allows those using the Internet to do so in a relaxed and social atmosphere.

The café itself seats around 900 and serves over 700 flavours of Green Mountain Coffee, with flavours varying from English Toffee Cream to Chocolate Raspberry. There are two seating areas outside, ideal for warmer weather, one with spectacular views of the Al Ashrafiyeh hilltop.

Yet, the most striking aspect of all is the decor, described by Architect Madian Jazerah as "Renovation vs. Preservation."

Having rented two old houses in Amman's' first circle, the place has a neo-Arabesque tone combined with a melange of different styles.

He introduced a modern twentieth century skylight theme and incorporated the original mosaic floors into the decor.

This, along with the vibrant colour scheme of turquoises, blues, greens, reds and yellows, gives a warm yet "new-age" atmosphere, ideal for the Internet theme and the progressive concept it represents.

Books@Cafe is an interesting phenomenon combining both education and pleasure. It opens officially this Monday.

What's Going On

FIFTH THEATRE FESTIVAL

*Two plays entitled "The Mysterious Offer" and "Never Changed" at the Royal Cultural Centre respectively at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

LECTURE

*"British Museums: Innovative Methods for Culture and Heritage Awareness" by Ms. Nelly Lama at the Friends of Archaeology Centre at 6:30 p.m. (Tel. 6996682).

EXHIBITIONS

* Display of handwoven products marking Mother's Day at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until March 21.

*Spring exhibition 1997 at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina, until April 6.

* Artworks by Mohammad Ali Shaker at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh until March 31.

* Exhibition of Saudi products at Amman Intemtaional Exhibit Centre, Marj Al Hamam, until March 20.

* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

Foreigners flee Albanian capital but shooting subsides

TIRANA (R) — U.S. military helicopters resumed the evacuation of Americans and other foreigners from Albania Saturday, although the capital Tirana was calmer after a show of force by police.

The operation, suspended Friday after two Marine Cobra helicopters were fired on, restarted at dawn Saturday and by midday more than 120 people had been brought out.

Tirana was quieter Saturday morning, with the level of gunfire greatly reduced. Authorities facing a nationwide slide into anarchy have sought to restore order by parading armoured vehicles on the streets and raising police pay.

Justice Minister Spartak Ngjela said the government had set up special, highly paid, police units to disarm gunmen who have brought the country to anarchy.

The move is clearly aimed at tackling the lawlessness ripping the country apart after civilians looted barracks as the army disintegrated and nervous police melted away.

At one of Tirana's main police stations, a crowd of about 200 men were waiting outside to join the new units. Uniformed police were on the streets again after having disappeared several days ago.

The United States has so far evacuated more than 600 people from Tirana, which in recent days has been the scene of growing lawlessness with people looting rifles from arms depots and loosing off bursts of gunfire into the air.

A U.S. military spokesman said it was hoped that 200 people would be evacuated from Tirana Saturday. A group of 25 Russian diplomats were expected to fly out with the Americans.

Although the evacuation appeared to be going smoothly, there was an atmosphere of tension at the U.S. diplomatic compound in Tirana, from where the helicopters were taking off.

U.S. Marines confronted a group of plain-clothes Albanian police who arrived in two buses with their Kalashnikov assault rifles poking out of the windows.

The police, who said they had been called in after a shooting incident nearby, moved off down a hill to disperse Albanian civilians who had gathered at the compound walls.

On Friday, two U.S. helicopters were fired on, while an Italian helicopter was also hit. German troops mounting a helicopter rescue exchanged fire with gunmen on the ground, wounding one Albanian.

As European Union (EU) foreign ministers met in the Netherlands to discuss Albania, the international community's top civilian official in Bosnia called for Western military intervention in Albania, as requested by Tirana.

In a statement issued to Reuters in London, Carl Bildt said failure to act would make current discussions on a common European Union foreign and security policy look "pathetic."

"A limited military operation in Albania seems essential in order to demonstrate the resolve of Europe in dealing with instability and security threats, as well as to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid which will be necessary and to facilitate the elections which must come," he said.

But EU officials said there was no sign that any member country had the appetite to become involved militarily.

"Does the West want to go into Albania? Who are we going to help?" one EU diplomat said ahead of the meeting in the Dutch town of Apeldoorn.

Officials said the EU ministers were likely to throw their support behind the mediation efforts of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

OSCE mediator Franz Vranitzky said outside military intervention was vital, but German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said Bonn had no intention of deploying peacekeeping troops and was "extremely sceptical" about such a plan.

Albanian President Sali Berisha appeared on television Friday with his new prime minister, Bashkim Fino, and members of an all-party cabinet he approved this week after long resistance to the idea.

He said Albanians had to expend their own efforts in addition to the military aid it requested from NATO's European members — the Western European Union.

A toddler is carried by its mother aboard the USS Nashville after being evacuated from Tirana by helicopter as part of the evacuation of U.S. embassy staff and relatives from the empoverished Albanian capital. Some 400 Americans were evacuated by helicopter to three ships of an amphibious ready group in the Adriatic, before being transferred to southern Italy. The evacuation was suspended after a marine helicopter reported being fired on by a missile (Reuter photo)

Armenia denies secret arms supplies from Russia

YEREVAN (Agencies) — Armenia has rejected charges by Russian cabinet ministers that it secretly received weapons from Moscow, an action neighbouring Azerbaijan said raised the risk of war.

"I categorically deny the statements made by (Defence Minister Igor) Rodionov and Aman Tuleyev (Russian minister for cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States)," Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman Arsen Gaspayan told Reuters.

"These statements have no grounds," he said.

The arms shipments were first reported by Mr. Tuleyev last month and Mr. Rodionov was reported to have confirmed them in a letter, addressed to Mr. Tuleyev, on Feb. 28.

Andrei Urnov, Russia's ambassador to Yerevan, played down Mr. Rodionov's comments. He said only Russia's president, prime minister and certain Foreign Ministry officials were authorised to make such statements.

"With all my respect for Rodionov, I cannot view his statement as an official one," Mr. Urnov said.

Mr. Rodionov wrote in the letter, released to the media earlier this week, that weapons were supplied free of charge to Armenia from the Russian Defence Ministry's stockpiles from 1994 to 1996.

He said the transfer — including 84 tanks and 50 infantry combat vehicles — had not had Russian government approval. He did not provide details of how the transfer of weapons took place or who was involved.

The case "has been sent to the main military prosecutor's office for further investigation," said Mr. Rodionov, who was appointed defence minister last July.

Azerbaijan condemned the shipments, saying they violated a 1994 ceasefire designed to end a conflict with Armenia over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Earlier this month, Azeri Foreign Minister Hasan Hasanov said Armenia had obtained offensive missile systems capable of carrying out a nuclear attack on his country. An Azeri Defence Ministry official said the rockets had been shipped to Armenia from Russia some time in the last two years.

Mr. Rodionov's letter made no mention of any missile systems.

Russia's RIA news agency Thursday quoted a representative of Rosvooruzheniye, the government agency which oversees arms sales, who expressed doubt that weapons had been transferred illegally to Armenia.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been embroiled for nine years in a conflict over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, populated by ethnic Armenians and seeking independence from Azerbaijan.

War over the issue killed thousands of people before a ceasefire was declared in 1994 after Armenia made big territorial gains.

Meanwhile, the Azarbaijan parliament protested Friday against the delivery of Russian arms to Armenia, saying it "damaged confidence" in Moscow's role as mediator in regional hostilities, the Azerbaijan Turan agency reported.

The MPs passed a resolution saying the illegal delivery of tanks and infantry fighting vehicles between 1994 and 1996 "caused grave damage to Russo-Azerbaijan relations and Azerbaijan's confidence in Russia's position as co-president of the Minsk Group of the OSCE," which is trying to resolve a conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, both ex-Soviet countries.

Thousands demonstrate against Lukashenko in Belarus capital

MINSK (Agencies) — Some 20,000 demonstrators chanting slogans hostile to Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko marched through central Minsk Saturday amid tight security.

The protest march was called by the main nationalist and Communist opposition parties to mark Belarus' Constitution Day. There were no violent incidents as the march began, an AFP reporter said.

The marchers, carrying the red-and-white post-independence Belarus flag, held a meeting later at the Minsk Sports Palace.

They chanted "down with Lukashenko" and "freedom, independence."

On March 6, Mr. Lukashenko imposed restrictions on the right to demonstrate, banning slogans which "humiliate the authorities," along with the rad-and-white flag, which he replaced with the republic's former Soviet-era flag.

Many deputies from the former parliament, dissolved by Mr. Lukashenko last November, were among the demonstrators, including three former parliament speakers — Stanislav Shushkevich, Mecbislav Grib and Simyon Sbaretsky.

Mr. Lukasbenko, a former collective farm boss, acquired sweeping new powers in a controversial November referendum and disbanded the former parliament, replacing it with an assembly staffed with loyal deputies.

Under the new constitution, Mr. Lukasbenko has the rigbt to dissolve the lower house of parliament, veto its decisions, hire and fire the heads of a raft of key bodies including the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and tbe Central Bank.

Opposition and civil liberties groups accuse Mr. Lukashenko of human rights violations, including curbs on the media and freedom of speech.

Belarus police Friday arrested about 100 people during a demonstration by the nationalist opposition National Front in Minsk.

Several opposition marches have resulted in scuffles with police and arrests since Mr. Lukashenko restricted the right to protest.

Belarussian police burst into the National Front's headquarters Thursday, and arrested its Vice-President Yuri Khodyko, the party said.

Two Americans and two Germans were detained during the protest, state television said Saturday.

A journalist wbo was arrested with three of the four foreigners Friday said they had been released after several hours.

"Several people were arrested, including two American and two German citizens, for active participation in the protest," the television announcer said, quoting the Interior Ministry.

One of the Americans works for an International Centre on Cultural Affairs in Minsk. The two Germans were working for a student newspaper and were members of the Green Party, the journalist, Roman Yakovlevsky, said.

"We were held for few hours. They took our fingerprints, filmed us and let uss go," Mr. Yakovlevsky said.

Dissenting votes in Chinese parliament show 'progress'

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese legislators were quoted Saturday as hailing unprecedented votes of dissent in the National People's Congress (NPC) Friday as signs of "progress" towards democracy.

"The progress is obvious when one considers that a few years ago you could only see all the deputies raising their bands to approve every resolution — without any opposition," veteran NPC Deputy Zhu Siming was quoted as saying on the front page of the official China Daily.

Mr. Zhu, who has sat on the body for 14 years, said deputies to People's Congresses nationwide bad a growing awareness of their ability to speak their minds and were becoming more representative of common people.

Large numbers of legislators cast votes against government work reports on crime and corruption at the close of the annual session of the legislature — commonly derided as a rubber stamp for China's one-party system.

Of the 2,685 deputies wbo voted in the Great Hall of the People Friday, 31.5 per cent abstained or voted against the Supreme People's Court annual report, while 40 per cent gave the same rough treatment to the report of the supreme people's procuratorate.

Although the NPC has experimented with dissent on several occasions in the past five years, sucb a large vote against a government work document is unheard of, and there was an audible gasp of surprise around the hall when the figures were announced.

Another deputy, Fan Zengsheng, said the NPC was learning to sbow its will on the enforcement, as well as passage, of laws.

The report on the implementation of the country's agricultural law "reflected our increased supervision of law enforcement," be said. The NPC approved the report by an 89-per cent margin.

Despite praise in the China Daily article for parliamentary dissent — labelled the "Development of a Democratic Legal System" — the Communist Party (CPC) mouthpiece People's Daily took a more traditional view.

The newspaper Saturday hailed the NPC session's accomplishments with an editorial titled, "to accomplish the great cause with one heart and one mind."

"The success of the two sessions indicates that people of all ethnic groups are determined to rally more closely round tbe CPC Central Committee with Comrade Jiang Zemin as the core," it said.

It also exhorted People's Congresses and advisory bodies at all levels in China to "better exercise their power and perform their duties" this year, adding that they comprise "China's fundamental political system."

The editorial failed to mention the votes on the crime and graft reports in its list of the session's "great achievements."

Only 1,839 deputies, or 68.5 of those wbo voted, approved the Supreme Court report, compared to 83.1 per cent at last year's NPC.

The reception for the procuratorate report was even weaker, with 1,621 voting in favour, or 60 per cent — compared to 72.9 per cent in 1996.

In presenting their reports Tuesday, Supreme People's Court President Ren Jianxin and procurator General Zhang Siqing had admitted that official corruption remained a serious problem.

N. Irish murder revives old fears

BELFAST (R) — Irish Republicans blamed Protestant guerrillas loyal to Britain Saturday for killing a Catholic father of nine at his house in Belfast, capital of British-ruled Northern Ireland, late Friday.

Police confirmed that the victim, named by neighbours as John Slane, died in a guerrilla shooting but would not speculate on who pulled the trigger.

No group admitted the attack which revived old sectarian fears and cast new shadows over the province's struggling peace efforts.

Some 24 hours earlier, suspected IRA guerrillas seriously wounded a policeman and a soldier in the latest of a succession of Northern Ireland attacks that have killed two soldiers since last October.

Loyalist groups that support British rule have observed a shaky truce since October 1994, six weeks after an historic IRA ceasefire that lasted 17 months until a bombing wave in British cities in February 1996.

Catholics say if loyalists returned to an old tactic of murdering random Irish nationalists it would be a body blow to hopes of an early end to conflict.

The IRA is fighting to end British rule and merge Northern Ireland with largely Catholic Ireland. The combined loyalist military command, which controls loyalists, insists that its ceasefire remains in place.

The victim was shot dead by in front of some of his children by at least one assailant who burst into his home near the falls road, a pro-Irish zone, police said.

"Terrorists have visited our streets again in Northern Ireland and plunged another family into grief," police Superintendent Bob Foster told media crews at the scene.

Asked whether loyalist were the killers, Mr. Foster replied: "We have no indication at this stage, it is much too early to speculate. We are actively pursuing our investigations."

Neighbour Stephanie Clarke told reporters she saw two attackers, one of them armed, leave Slane's house and speed off in a car.

"He was in the kitchen making his wife a cup of tea and making up the kids' (hot milk) bottles when they went into his home and murdered him," said Ms. Clarke, who tried to give the victim first aid.

Sinn Fein, the political wing of resurgent IRA guerrillas, accused their loyalist foes who have operated a fragile truce since October 1994.

Hardline loyalist activists have launched four attacks on Catholics since December, apparently in reprisal for Irish Republican Army ambushes of troops and police.

"All the indications are at this stage that this was an attack by a (Protestant) loyalist death squad. It is additional evidence that confirms that the loyalist cessation of violence ended some time ago," a Sinn Fein spokesman said.

Comet may offer insight into Earth's beginning

LONDON (R) — Comet Hale-Bopp, which promises to be one of the brightest comets ever to delight sky-watchers, may be made up of the same primordial elements that formed the Earth, British astronomers said Friday.

As the comet comes closer and shines more brightly measurements are turning up surprising numbers of chemicals, including water, methanol, sulphur monoxide and sodium, Alan Fitzsimmons of Queen's University Belfast told a meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society.

"This really does link Hale-Bopp to the primordial nebula," Mr. Fitzsimmons said.

Astronomers think comets are probably primitive remains of the material that first formed the solar system 4.6 billion years ago. But comets are frustratingly rare — only about 30 have been identified — so every moment spent examining one is valuable.

The scientists are having a field day with Hale-Bopp, which has been shining brightly since it was first spotted in July 1995 by the two amateur astronomers, Alan Hale and Thomas Bopp, after whom it is named.

As it approaches on a near right-angle to the Earth's orbit, more and more dust and gas is being blown off by the solar wind. This picks up the sun's light and can be seen clearly.

Spectroscopic analysis can show what chemicals are present in the object. So far a look at the isotopes – slight variations in the elements — shows they are similar to those found on Earth, Mr. Fitzsimmons said.

He said 19 different European groups were teaming up to use eight different telescopes on the Canary Islands to examine Hale-Bopp's molecular structure more closely.

The U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) plans to launch a series of sounding rockets above Earth's atmosphere to gauge the composition of the dual-tailed comet.

The observations could help confirm what many scientists already believe — that water on Earth came from comets crashing onto the surface very early on in the planet's life.

Mr. Fitzsimmons said many other aspects about the comet remained frustratingly elusive. For instance, estimates had been made of the size of the nucleus, or head, of the comet but because it is so small they vary by 75 per cent.

The closest estimate, he said, was that it is 40 kilometres in diameter — but the margin of error is plus or minus 30 kilometres.

Also the comet, travelling at more than 160,000 kilometres per hour, is sending off mysterious jets of matter. Mr. Fitzsimmons said no one had quite figured out what the jets were or what they meant.

The comet will be closest to Earth on March 22. But this week should be prime viewing time in the northern hemisphere because the predawn sky will be moonless until March 19 and the comet will also be visible in the early evening sky.

Belgium steps up justice system reform

BRUSSELS (R) — The Belgian government Friday proposed new measures to reform the legal system in the wake of a series of cbild sex scandals wbich have shattered public confidence in the authorities.

Belgian Justice Minister Stefaan De Clerck told a news conference after the weekly cabinet meeting that the government approved new legislation on parole procedures.

The decision to grant parole will no longer be taken by the justice minister but by a "multi-disciplinary commission" which has to take a unanimous decision.

The government also introduced a "supplementary security measure" for recidivists and sex crime offenders who could be placed under the government's custody for up to 10 years after serving their normal sentence.

The government also laid out criteria for a central penalty register and for the reorganisation of some judicial police services, and presented a new draft law to increase the fight against corruption.

Several paedophile scandals have erupted in Belgium since last August, revealing a catalogue of mistakes in investigation.

At least five young girls have died while in the hands of paedopbiles.

Mr. De Clerck's predecessor Melchior Wathelet had been blamed for allowing a convicted cbild rapist, Marc Dutroux, to be released in 1992, 10 years early from a 13-year sentence.

Dutroux led police to the bodies of two young girls who had been abducted 14 months earlier and buried in his garden. Two others were found on another property.

Questions have been raised over whether Mr. Dutrotux and his alleged accomplices have been enjoying high-level protection to remain undetected so long.

A parliamentary commission has been looking into the affair for six months to try and determine who is to blame for the bungling.

The commission is due to make its report on April 15.

Tajikistan says troops captured maverick rebel commander

ALMATY (R) — Tajikistan said Saturday its troops, helped by an opposition field commander, had captured rebel leader Bakhrom Sadirov, who seized foreigners last month in a two-week hostage crisis.

"The operation is still going on," Tajik presidential spokesman Zafar Saidov said by telephone from the Tajik capital Dushanbe.

He said Sadirov had been captured Friday in a two-pronged anack by government forces and field Commander Mullo Abdullo on his base near Obigarm, 80 kilometres east of Dushanbe.

"It is the first joint operation by government forces and opposition," the spokesman said.

He said 19 other members of Mr. Sadirov's group bad been arrested along with their leader, who was being beld by the Presidential Guard. He made no mention of casualties.

Mr. Sadirov's men took Russian and Western hostages last month and won the safe passage of his brother Rizvon and a group of rebels from neighbouring Afghanistan before releasing them.

It was the second hostage-taking by the maverick commander in tbree months. The spokesman said the whereabouts of Mr. Sadirov's brother were unknown.

Mr. Abdullo is part of the Islamic opposition which has been embroiled in a four-year civil war in the former Soviet republic, but which signed a U.N.-sponsored peace accord in December.

A week ago the two sides signed a military agreement in Moscow wbich builds on the shaky accord with a four-phase plan to integrate armed opposition units into the Tajik army.

Opposition field commanders in the Garm Valley last month protested against the Sadirov brothers and blamed the government for letting Mr. Rezvon back into Tajikistan.

They asked the government to put an end to what they called the Sadirovs' "criminal activities," warning that if the authorities did not move they would take steps themselves.

President Bill Clinton smiles as he is wheeled onto Air Force One March 14, at Palm Beach International Airport. Mr. Clinton tore a tendon between his right thigh and knee when he slipped on stairs at the Florida home of Australian golfer Greg Norman early this morning. Mr. Clinton was flown to Washington for emergency surgery to repair the damage (Reuter photo)

Clinton undergoes successful knee surgery

BETHESDA, MD. (R) — Surgeons successfully repaired a torn tendon in President Bill Clinton's right knee Friday after he injured it in Florida and said he will be able to attend a U.S.-Russia summit in Europe next week.

Mr. Clinton spoke by telephone to a news conference about 90 minutes after the two-hour, four-minute surgery was completed, saying he felt "great" and would meet Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Helsinki, Finland, next week as scheduled.

"I'm enjoying this press conference," Mr. Clinton told reporters from his suite at the National Naval Medical Centre in the Washington suburb, prompting a wave of laughter.

"I want you guys to quit giving my doctor a hard time about letting me go to Helsinki," he added. "We're all going to Helsinki. We have to go to Helsinki."

Mr. Clinton appeared to be in good spirits during his brief remarks and aides said he had been relatively relaxed all day, joking and bantering with his doctors and consulting with them on the country music that was played during his surgery.

"I feel great and don't worry about it," Mr. Clinton told the news conference. "I'll just spend a little time here and get home and go back to work."

Surgeons told reporters there were no complications during the surgery that reattached a right-knee tendon Mr. Clinton tore when he stumbled on a stair early Friday morning in Florida.

"We're very happy with our repair," said Dr. David Adkison, the surgeon who carried out the operation, which began at 2:39 p.m. est (1939 GMT) and ended at 4:43 p.m. est (2043 GMT).

Dr. Adkison saw no reason why Mr. Clinton should not go to Helsinki to see Mr. Yeltsin. "He can travel," the surgeon said. "Flying on Air Force One, I understand, is not like flying on a commercial airline."

Mr. Clinton caught his heel on a step at the Florida estate of Australian golfer Greg Norman early Friday, tearing the quadriceps tendon connecting the kneecap to the upper thigh in his right leg.

The knee-buckling tumble — "he heard a very loud pop," one aide said — will put Mr. Clinton on crutches for about eight weeks and the president's doctors said it is likely to take him six months before he can return to his regular running and golf.

In the interim, he will have to undergo months of physical rehabilitation on the leg. Dr. Adkison said it was reasonable to expect the president to regain full mobility in the knee.

Mr. Clinton, 50, was wheeled to his hospital room after the surgery, where wife Hillary and daughter Chelsea awaited him, for a stay of at least one night.

Dr. Adkison would not say exactly how long the president would remain in the hospital, but said that a 48-hour stay was typical. Doctors said he would then be equipped with a knee brace rather than a cast.

"He was very talkative and cheerful during the procedure" and alert most of the time, although he apparently dozed off now and then, Mr. McCurry said. At one point he asked for a book to pass the time but the doctors turned him down.

He chose tapes by country singers Lyle Lovett and Jimmy Buffett to accompany the surgery over an operating room speaker system, the White House said.

Mr. Clinton had a "regional" anaesthetic that numbed him from the mid-section down so that he was never rendered unconscious, the spokesman said. Constitutional procedures for shifting authority temporarily to Vice-President Al Gore were therefore not necessary.

Doctors had to drill holes in the kneecap and in the tendon and run sutures through the holes to reattach the tendon, which controls the ability to straighten the leg.

"This is not a terribly severe injury and not a terribly complicated operation to perform," Dr. David Wade, chief of the Naval Hospital's Clinical Staff, said as surgery began.

Mr. Clinton's wife Hillary planned to go ahead with a two-week tour of six African nations, but was delaying her departure by one day, until Sunday, to see her husband through the start of his recovery.

Mr. McCurry said the incident was also one factor in the postponement of the planned White House visit of King Hussein planned for Tuesday.

A senior state department official said another possible diplomatic casualty of the presidential mishap could be a scheduled Monday meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, which might have to be scrapped.

Mr. Primakov arrives in Washington over the weekend for talks to prepare the Helsinki summit.

Zaire rebels capture Kisangani airport; troops reportedly looting

KINSHASA (R) — Rebels seized the international airport on the edge of Zaire's third city of Kisangani, launching a much-heralded battle for the army's war zone headquarters, diplomats and aid workers said Saturday.

France said that a plane with an escort of 30 paratroops from its base in neighbouring Central African Republic flew in and successfully airlifted out 15 foreign nationals. Aid sources said they used a second airport, which is almost in town.

Diplomats, aid workers and a regional military source said some soldiers from Zaire's notoriously ill-disciplined army had gone on a looting spree in the city before fleeing across the Zaire River.

But initial reports suggested that the rebels, who launched their assault on the international airport Friday evening, had made little immediate headway in the city itself.

"The international airport has already been taken and looting has spread across the city," a senior U.N. official said in Zaire's capital Kinshasa Saturday.

The fall of Kisangani would be the biggest setback for the government since the rebels took up arms in October, vowing to topple veteran President Mobutu Sese Seko. They already hold towns and a large swathe of territory in the east.

A Defence Ministry spokesman in Kinshasa was unable to give details of the fighting but confirmed that there had been shooting. "The situation is very tense and there is movement in every direction," the spokesman told Reuters.

The government had concentrated soldiers, Serb mercenaries and hardline Rwandan Hutu allies at Kisangani, a major port on the Zaire River before it flows west to Kinshasa.

A regional military source said that two main rebel columns merged to attack the international airport, where mercenaries and military hardware including combat helicopters were based.

"The mercenaries fled the airport but nobody knows where they have gone. Some of the senior military seem to have gone across the river," a senior Western diplomat said Saturday.

The regional source said frightened civilians from Kisangani's 500,000-strong population were massing near the Zaire River hoping to board barges. "The soldiers are looting Kisangani as they flee. Many are leaving by boats. There is confusion among the citizens," the source added.

France has troops based in Central African Republic under a defence accord. The Defence Ministry in Paris said the rescue mission with a C-160 transall plane went off without incident.

A spokesman said seven French nationals, one Belgian, a Swiss and six Africans of separate nationalities employed by non-government organisations were evacuated. U.N. officials in Kinshasa said all foreign aid workers were out.

The Tutsi-led rebels took up arms in October accusing the Zairean authorities of denying them citizenship and preparing to expel them to Rwanda, their ancestral home.

Zaire accuses neighbouring Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi of invading in support of the rebels. All three deny the charge.

The government has accepted a U.N. ceasefire plan. The rebels have resisted diplomatic pressure for a ceasefire, most recently Thursday during a meeting in Uganda between their leader Laurent Kabila and U.N. special envoy Mohammad Sahnoun.

Mr. Mobutu has been out of the country for most of the time since August when he had prostate cancer surgery in Europe. A senior supporter has predicted he will return Monday.

Meanwhile, President Mobutu's popularity has plunged to a two-year low, five months after the start of the rebellion in the east, according to an opinion poll conducted in Kinshasa.

The same poll, dismissed by critics as unrepresentative of the nation as a whole, showed over half those questioned had "a good opinion" of Mr. Kabila — but few said they would ever vote for him.

The Zaire-based consulting company, Berci, which conducted the poll this month and describes itself as independent, said that almost 73 per cent of those questioned had a "bad opinion" of Zaire's ruler of 31 years.

"President Mobutu's image has suffered considerable erosion. Those with a good opinion of Marshal Mobutu have gone from 29 per cent in December to 13 per cent in March," Berci said.

Mr. Mobutu, 66, seized power in a 1965 military coup.

The poll said the majority of those questioned felt Mr. Mobutu had failed to deliver on a pledge made during a visit in December to resolve the crisis in the east. "For almost 88 per cent of those questioned, the head of state has not responded to the expectations raised during his speech," it said.

Critics said the capital, with a population estimated around five million, was a traditional hotbed of opposition to Mr. Mobutu, and not representative of nationwide opinion. Mr. Mobutu's support has traditionally been much stronger outside the capital.

Only 13.6 per cent of those polled believed that the army was capable of recapturing territory from the rebels.

"Almost 51 per cent of those questioned have a good opinion of the rebel leader," the Berci poll analysis said. "Laurent Kabila constitutes the major beneficiary of Zairean public opinion for the actions by the Tutsi and Banyamulenge revolt."

Migrants from regions affected by the war had a lower opinion of him — "61 per cent of natives of Bandundu trust Kabila, against 27 per cent from Shaba, and 28 per cent from Upper Zaire, two regions suffering from the effects of the war."

Lebed launches new party with eye on Kremlin

MOSCOW (R) — General Alexander Lebed, undeterred by two false starts, launched a third bid for the Russian presidency Friday with a new political party he said would take power this year.

The popular retired paratroop commander came closest to his Kremlin goal last autumn, when President Boris Yeltsin's heart problems increased the prospects for an early election and Gen. Lebed's own rating rose to record highs.

Mr. Yeltsin's apparent recovery this month has dimmed those prospects. But Gen. Lebed showed no signs of patience as he opened the first congress of his Russian Popular Republican Party.

"We're not here because Gen. Lebed took it into his head to create a party. No," Gen. Lebed said in his characteristic growl.

"The people asked us to create this party," he added. He said the 10,000 members it had attracted so far represented all sections of Russian society, which he said had been deceived and robbed by the current leadership.

Brushing off suggestions that Mr. Yeltsin would serve out the second four-year term he won in last July's election, Gen. Lebed said his rival's recent reappearance in public life would be shortlived.

"It's not a return to politics," Gen. Lebed told a news conference. "It is Boris Nikolayevich's swansong," he said, making a pun on his own last name, which means "swan" in Russian.

Frenchmen imprisoned in Kabul can expect lenient sentence — official

KABUL (AFP) — Two Frenchmen imprisoned by the Taleban on charges of violating Islamic Law could expect a "lenient and sympathetic" sentence but probably not an imminent release, the attorney-general said Saturday.

"I cannot predict whether they may or may not be released by Nawroz," the Afghan new year, which starts on March 21, Maulavi Jalilullah Maulawizada told AFP.

The expatriate aid community in Kabul has received hints from various Taleban officials that the two Frenchmen might be released by the Afghan new year.

The attorney-general said his investigation of Frenchmen Frederic Michel and Jose Daniel Llorente had been completed, but it was up to the Supreme Court to pass a verdict.

"The Supreme Court has not yet received the (Frenchmen's) file," said Mr. Maulawizada.

The attorney-general said it was most unlikely the Supreme Court would receive the file before Nawroz, which commences next Friday.

He said the "results and views" of his own investigation into the two Frenchmen were forwarded Saturday to the attorney and local court of the Kabul precinct where the alleged offences had taken place.

"From there Mr. Maulawizada said the file on the two Frenchmen, who work for the French humanitarian agency Action Contre La Faim (ACF), would be passed on to the Supreme Court.

He said the local attorney makes recommendations for "punishment according to Shariat (Islamic Law)" but it was up to the Supreme Court to pass the final verdict.

"It might be imprisonment and expulsion or whatever they (Supreme Court) decide," Mr. Maulawizada stated.

"But I predict imprisonment and expulsion," he added.

Russia seeks compromise — at home and abroad

MOSCOW (R) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, whose job looks secure despite Boris Yeltsin's looming government resshuffle, flies to Washington Saturday to prepare the president's Helsinki summit with Bill Clinton.

The Kremlin said Friday, more than a week after Mr. Yeltsin ordered sweeping government changes to tackle a deepening social crisis, that details of the reshuffle would finally be announced before Mr. Yeltsin heads for Finland Wednesday.

Mr. Primakov will be seeking to lay the ground for a deal with the U.S. president that could lead to a compromise on NATO's expansion plans. Mr. Yeltsin said Friday the March 19-20 summit would be his toughest ever but that compromise was possible.

There may also be compromise — this time between Russia's reformers and Mr. Yeltsin's more conservative allies — when the president unveils his new government team after meeting Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin Monday or Tuesday.

The Foreign Ministry has said Mr. Primakov has proposals to make in the row with NATO over its plans to offer membership to Moscow's former Communist allies in Eastern and Central Europe.

Mr. Primakov, who meets Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Saturday, Defence Secretary William Cohen Sunday and Mr. Clinton Monday, also expects serious discussion on arms control.

Helsinki will be a chance for Mr. Yeltsin, 66, to show he has recovered after eight months of heart trouble and pneumonia. He even got the chance to turn the tables and send get well wishes to Mr. Clinton, who had an operation on his injured knee Friday.

The Kremlin leader says he is determined to take Russia's international and domestic problems in hand.

But the time taken to form the new government since he handed a leading role a week ago to his liberal chief-of-staff Anatoly Chubais has fuelled speculation that cutting out dead wood and creating a streamlined pro-reform team is proving hard.

Indications from Mr. Yeltsin that the upper ranks of the cabinet may be fuller than expected was also seen by some analysts as a sign he may be slow to alienate faithful supporters for the sake of the new approach Mr. Chubais is believed to be seeking.

Mr. Yeltsin said Friday there would, in addition to Mr. Chubais as sole first deputy premier, be seven deputy premiers. There are three first deputies and nine deputies in the present team.

Mr. Chernomyrdin was ordered by Mr. Yeltsin to get rid of much of the government he formed only in August. Kremlin sources say Mr. Chubais, who is hated by the Communists for privatising Russian industry, wants a free hand to push through more market reforms.

But there are more conservative voices around Mr. Yeltsin, too, notably among Russia's big industrialists who see Mr. Chernomyrdin, a former gas industry chief, as a guarantor of their interests.

Mr. Chubais, 41, is said to want to reduce the influence of ministries whose close relationships with the industries they regulate is a hangover from the days of Soviet central planning.

Mr. Yeltsin has shown time and again his propensity to play his various groups of supporters off against each other, so the eventual cabinet line-up may well represent a balance of forces.

Despite the time taken to announce the new government, there is an urgency in the situation. A week after returning from Helsinki, Mr. Yeltsin will face a nationwide strike on March 27.

Fortunately for Mr. Yeltsin, however, his recovery makes an early vote less likely, although the Communists too renewed demands Friday for him to step down on health grounds.

A poll by the Vtsiom Research Institute showed that eight months into his second term, 20 per cent of Russians approved of Mr. Yeltsin's record and 79 per cent disapproved. Ominously, Mr. Chubais was even more unpopular, with an 85-per cent disapproval rating.

U.K. welfare reform to head Major's election agenda

BATH, England (R) — British Prime Minister John Major planned a fresh attempt to rally his dispirited Conservatives Saturday by promising the biggest advance in welfare provision for 50 years if they win the election.

With weeks to go until polling day, party sources said Mr. Major would also unveil the slogan that the ruling party would campaign under: "You can only be sure with the Conservatives."

But they ruled out the possibility that Mr. Major would announce the election date — widely expected to be May 1 — when he addresses the annual meeting of the Conservative Central Council in the western England town of Bath.

An election must be held by May 22.

Mr. Major's address, due to start at 1100 GMT, comes amid increasing evidence that even his own MPs cannot believe that the Conservatives can win a fifth successive term.

With an opinion poll putting the opposition Labour Party 25 points ahead, two Conservative MPs, both former ministers, Friday spoke openly about what might follow a defeat for their party.

While Edwina Currie said Mr. Major should resign as party leader immediately on losing power, John Biffen raised the prospect of the defeat being so severe that some of the leading candidates to replace him would no longer be MPs.

Their statements drew an apparent rebuke from party Chairman Brian Mawhinney, who told the Bath meeting to loud applause: "To every Conservative one message — if you don't have something to say that will help us win, don't say anything at all."

The sources said Mr. Major would claim that recently announced Conservative policy plans for the state to disengage from its role as a provider of pensions and of care homes for the elderly would mean a revolution in welfare.

Conservatives say, for instance, that by saving for pensions with a private insurance company, Britons can win themselves a far more prosperous old age.

The sources said Mr. Major would declare that the improvements would be on a scale only seen twice in Britain this century — once when Liberals introduced old-age pensions in 1910 and then when a Labour government ushered in the welfare state in the late 1940s.

"It is time for the great move forward in public welfare," the sources quoted the prepared text of Mr. Major's speech as saying.

Pakistan to free 38 Indian minors in goodwill gesture ahead of talks

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — The Pakistani government announced Saturday it would repatriate 38 Indian children detained here as a goodwill gesture aimed at improving the atmosphere for forthcoming bilateral talks.

The minors were apprehended on Indian boats which "trespassed" into Pakistani territorial waters recently.

The government has decided to make the "unilateral gesture, on humanitarian considerations" to create a "propitious climate" for the forthcoming talks between the Pakistani and Indian foreign secretaries, the announcement said.

Islamabad hoped that "this humanitarian gesture will lead to the early release of all boats and crew detained in both countries," it said.

The foreign secretaries of Pakistan and India are due to meet in New Delhi on March 28 for four days of talks in a bid to improve the long-strained relations between the South Asian neighbours.

The meeting will mark the resumption of bilateral talks suspended since the last session between the foreign secretaries of the two countries in January 1994.

Separately, a Foreign Office spokesman said it was "premature" to talk of a meeting between Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart H.D. Deve Gowda during the South Asian summit in the Maldives in May.

But Pakistan would welcome a meeting between the two prime ministers for "meaningful discussions on all outstanding issues including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute," the spokesman said.

The official pointed out that invitations had not yet been received to the summit of the Seven-Nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) scheduled in Male.

It is customary for leaders to exchange views during SAARC summits, said the spokesman, who was commenting on Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's remarks Thursday that he was "very optimistic" the premiers would meet in Male.

Mr. Sharif proposed the foreign secretary level talks last month, in a reply to Mr. Gowda's congratulatory message on his assumption of office following the Feb. 3 elections in Pakistan.

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Politics to serve people

REGARDLESS OF whether there is a peace process in the Middle East or not, the fact remains that Thursday's wanton attack against Israeli children at Baqoura was a terrible and heinous crime that all Jordanians are ashamed of. Even if Jordan and Israel were not in a state of peace, the attack would have drawn Jordanian condemnation in the same strong tone that it indeed did from His Majesty King Hussein, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the government and all Jordanians. The Israelis themselves should be aware of the Jordanian stand more than anyone else; all they have to do is to remind themselves of the numerous incidents when Israeli schoolboys wandered into Jordanian territory to visit Petra over the years but were simply picked up and sent back across the border without even being questioned.

In the context of the Baqoura incident, quite simply no sane person on earth could accept an armed attack against innocent children, whether Israeli, Arab or otherwise.

Jordan's record speaks for itself. And it is in this spirit that we have to reject the criticism levelled yesterday by Lebanese President Elias Hrawi, who lamented what he saw as Jordan's failure to condemn the 1996 Israeli missile attack on Qana in the same strong tones as the Kingdom denounced the Baqoura incident. Does Mr. Hrawi not remember or choose to ignore the fact that Jordan had voiced grave sorrow and its sense of sharing Lebanon's grief at that time? Perhaps the Lebanese leader has forgotten that it was his government and authorities who had turned down a Jordanian initiative to send the prime minister, Abdul Karim Kabariti, to Beirut in a show of solidarity with the Lebanese people who were then still under an Israeli blitz.

The history of the Arab World is plentiful of instances when Jordan shouldered more than its share whenever it came to humanitarian causes. This country does not make any apologies for its principles; nor does it seek praise and applause for its stands. It is Jordan's way of life and its people will continue to live by it.

Let no one overlook that Jordan's approach to humanitarian issues remains far above all political considerations, whether in the Arab context or otherwise. It is a principle that the Kingdom has adopted and long believed in. When it comes to issues that concern human life, politics should be at the service of such concerns.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for **Al Ra'i** Saturday expressed the view that the Jordanian soldier who shot and killed the Israeli schoolgirls in Baqoura must be mentally deranged and unstable because he has committed a crime which is bound to benefit Israel and harm Jordan's interests. That soldier's actions, said Fahed Fanek, has helped Benyamin Netanyahu to extricate himself from the present crisis which resulted from the world community's condemnation of Israel's plans to build a Jewish settlement in east Jerusalem's lands. By killing the innocent children, said the writer, the Jordanian soldier helped shift the world's attention from Israel's illegal measures, which were denounced by the U.N. General Assembly, to the victims of the shooting incident, thus enabling Israel to win world sympathy and shift the focus of world attention from the Israeli practices against the Palestinians and their lands to the border incident. The attacker who shot and killed the girls brought shame to the Jordanian Armed Forces, known for their discipline, and to the Kingdom which is known for its hospitality and excellent treatment of guests, continued the writer. He said that the attacker has committed an action similar to those deranged Israeli soldiers who committee crimes against Palestinian civilians in Hebron and other parts of Palestine over the past decades, but, he said, it has been proved that terrorist acts usually backfire and achieve just the opposite of the desired ends.

A WRITER for **Al Ra'i** called on Arab countries to respond to a call by Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh for lifting the sanctions imposed on Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and said that the Iraqis are continuing to suffer as long as they remain hostage to Rolf Ekeus and his team. Badri Mulki said the question of saving Iraq and its people from injustice is more important than the peace process and the Arab countries' drive to normalise relations with Israel and more important than current Arab states' drive to persuade Mr. Netanyahu to comply with the requirements of genuine peace. The Yemeni president's call should be heeded by the other Arab leaders who have to convene in a summit meeting, with the question of lifting the embargo on Iraq the only item on their agenda, urged the writer. He said the Iraqis will continue to face sufferings if their brothers and sisters in the Arab states fail to end the sanctions and provide Iraq with all its needs to resume normal life. The writer said Mr. Ekeus and his inspection teams who search for Iraq's weapons will continue to find excuses to perpetuate the sanctions which, he said, serve the interests of certain world powers which back Israel's measures in the occupied Arab lands.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

Global market — the mark of the 21st century

PERHAPS THE twenty first century, extending to the year 2100, is too long to lend itself to meaningful futuristic predictions. Therefore, it is more realistic to confine ourselves to the first decade of the coming century i.e., the ten years ending in 2010.

Many problems we lived with in the past decade or two will continue to be with us in the next decade, such as the Israeli challenge, Arab fragmentation, widespread poverty, high rate of unemployment, loose public administration, heavy external indebtedness, unsettled national identity, upgrading democracy and others.

The new, salient phenomenon expected to take place and lead to radical changes in our economy and social life is the full integration in the global market, which calls for extensive preparations and will necessitate many economic and social adjustments.

The global market is not selective; we either take it or leave it as a whole, with all the positive and negative consequences that come with it, thus accepting the rewards and meeting the costs. If we do not join the global market, we are condemned to isolation and stagnation, something I call Somalisation.

Joining the global market in a big way will begin within a year or two. The starting point is signing the partnership with the European Union, on the one hand, and joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO), on the other. By taking these two big steps we shall enjoy unlimited opportunities, but we shall, at the same time, be exposed to great challenges. We either pass the test and become a South-western Asian tiger or fail and get crushed under the feet of the successful players.

The global market has no mercy or safety nets for the unfit. Fortunately, the world appreciates our difficult circumstances and vulnerable position, and will lend us a helping hand during a temporary transitional period. The world markets will open up for our exports with immediate effect, while we sball be required to open up our markets gradually, over several years of transitional period, which will give our previously protected industries some breathing time to adapt themselves to the new environment and stand up to the new competition.

We have no other alternative but to take the risk. Ninety per cent of the world, including all advanced countries, are already on board, forming an open market on reciprocal basis. It is beyond reason to hesitate and be left with the minority of poor and backward countries sitting on the sidelines. The outcasts are looked upon in pity. They live off the hand-outs of the advanced world. Jordan made up its mind to join the world.

After joining the European and world markets, no one will tell us anymore that the Jordanian market is too small for big and feasible industries. Investors, be they Jordanians, Arabs or foreigners, will have access to the markets of Europe and the whole world. After that, everything depends on efficiency and competitiveness. We have to adopt the latest technologies and use the best methods of management, financing and marketing in order to survive.

Those among us who oppose the global market are exactly those who opposed the concept of market economy itself. They cannot imagine a world which is not controlled by some central power. Even the huge American, Japanese or German national economies will have no alternative but to submit to the absolute authority and logic of the global market and respond to its forces.

All great empires known in the history tried to unify the world under their control. With time, they all failed, faded away and fell. The global market is the sweeping power which will unify the world and might be the final stage in the long history of trade developments or the end of the history of economy.

'Jerusalem has been lost under Israel's frantic building projects'

By Dr. A. Clare Brandabur

HAVING JUST visited Jerusalem, I would like to warn all those who plan to visit the Holy City for Easter: you may not recognise the place. The old pictures of the fabulous city whose crenellated walls, church spires and golden dome once crowned rolling forested hills where shepherds tended their flocks no longer reflect the reality.

Today Jerusalem looks like a mad deconstruction zone, with cranes and bulldozers doing the work usually allotted to tanks and bombs. The red stony earth of Palestine is lacerated by dozens of new roads cut into the hillsides like trenches in a battlefield.

The Jewish neighbourhoods that all but choke the city of Jerusalem (the single exception in the noose — Jabal Abu Ghneim where Netanyahu has vowed to build 6,500 new Jewish homes) look like accretions from another planet. The menacing high-rise monoliths of French Hill, with their windowless sides facing Arab neighbours, the rows of Swiss chalets in monotonous phalanx swarming over the hills like the malignant spores of some noxious fungus, whole tops of mountains cut away raw, eaten up by frantic new fortress-like settlements, all on stolen land, all illegal.

Desmond Stewart remarked in "Palestinians: Victims of Expediency" that the Arab villages between Nablus and Ramallah grow out of the surrounding countryside like hair out of a beautiful healthy head, while the Jewish settlements look like "the false eyelashes of a transvestite spy."

Three years ago, Samir Odeh, a leader of the Palestinian community in Chicago, brought his two children to visit their grandmother in her East Jerusalem home. The morning after their arrival he sent the children out to the garden to smell the "sweet air of Palestine". When he did not follow them, they came back inside the house to find their father dying of a massive coronary. Turned away from the closest (Jewish) hospital, Samir died before he could receive treatment. At least this exiled Palestinian had the consolation of being buried in his homeland. But I am not original in saying that the Jerusalem he saw, even three years ago, broke his heart. And it is much uglier today.

Now Netanyahu, eager to cover up his crimes, has sealed up four Palestinian offices in East Jerusalem, among them the office of the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre, whose staff has tirelessly documented the assassinations, land confiscations, evictions, house demolitions, torture, practised by the Israelis against the indigenous people of Jerusalem and the whole of Palestine. Having worked with the Chicago branch of this organisation, I know the hardships they faced. Their field workers were arrested and beaten, funding is scarce, yet they struggle on.

I am sorry to say that members of the Arab community, in the U.S. and elsewhere, have failed to appreciate the work of this fine, professional human rights centre, and therefore failed to contribute the funding which would have enabled the centre to disseminate the information its members so arduously gather and whose work is more essential now than ever.

As an American, I am furious that U.S. taxpayers are funding this Israeli outrage and giving it their moral support. The statements of President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and White House Spokesman Nicholas Burns are weak; the settlements are "not helpful". Really! The U.S. veto of the mildly worded Security Council resolution condemning Israel for this final assault against Arab Jerusalem is a source of shame to any American who has seen, first hand, the terrible suffering, the gross injustice caused by this mistaken policy.

Americans must come to realise that among the noble projects their billions support are Israeli death squads, like that which attacked the village of Hizmeh just north of Jerusalem on Feb. 25. Dressed like Arabs, armed Israeli soldiers from what Israeli TV said was a "crack undercover unit known as "Duvdevan" or "Cherry" entered the house of a Palestinian whom they began to interrogate. When he screamed from their beatings and torture, a neighbour, Mohammed Abdul Aziz Abu Halui, 55, intervened to help the victim. Halui died after being shot, beaten and strangled; three others were wounded when the undercover Israelis opened fire on Palestinians who gathered to repel the attack. Then an Israeli army jeep arrived and whisked the perpetrators away.

In Guatemala they are called them death squads, in South Africa they are called death squads. It is time we called them death squads in Palestine as well and face the fact that this is what our money is paying for in the "peace process."

And if it is sad now that the beautiful city of Jerusalem has been lost under the frantic building projects of an Israeli state bent on eradicating its Arab, Muslim and Christian identity, there is worse to come. The same Jewish fanatics whose jealousy of the cultural heritage of Christianity and Islam now fuels this building programme have an agenda which calls for the ultimate destruction of both the great mosques, Al Aqsa and Dome of the Rock, and the Holy Sepulchre Church, as well as all the other churches. I have seen maps of the Holy City which shows all these non-Jewish holy places gone and in their place a future Temple of Solomon. This in spite of the consensus among archaeologists that Solomon's Temple was never located on the Haram Al Sharif — many believe it was not even in Jerusalem. But these zealots are determined to destruy the buildings sacred to others in order to assert exclusive domain over Jerusalem. Who is to stop them?

The writer is on the staff of the English Department at Al Isra University, Amman. She contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Globalisation — fine for some and bad for many

By John Cavanagh

WASHINGTON — An impression prevails that despite some problems with inequalities and turmoil, free trade is the major unifying force offering opportunity to working and poor people around the world.

But a growing body of evidence from researchers in many countries shows the devastating results of the free trade orthodoxy currently in favour among most governments.

The rise in inequality. A recent series of Washington Post articles acknowledges that free trade increases the gap between those who are part of the new global work force and those left out, but it suggests that globalisation is lifting millions out of poverty. However, the gap is important.

Researchers at the Institute for Policy Studies calculate that the combined wealth of the world's 447 billionaires is greater than the income of the poorest half of the world's people.

By our calculation, at least two-thirds of the new investment into the developing world goes to China and nine other rapidly growing countries. A new global economic apartheid of 24-richer countries, a dozen rapidly growing developing countries and 140 that are growing slowly or not at all become one of the major new threats to global security.

Dwindling jobs and wages. The series begins with a tour of a clean Philippine factory owned by a jeans company, where workers are relatively well paid. The article implies that a sizeable share of Third World workers are entering this phase.

But the article fails to mention the rampant subcontracting of clothing and footwear to people's homes, where child labour is not uncommon, or the terrible living conditions that accompany many of the factory jobs.

The world's top 200 corporations now have sales equivalent to 28 per cent of the world's measured economic activity, but they employ well under 1 per cent of the world's workers.

"In country after country, policies are adapted to serve the needs of global firms, often undermining stable communities, clean environments and dignified jobs. As corporate contributions become the determining factor in elections the world over, governments' ability to serve the needs of their people diminishes."

In addition, workers in most of the Third World's new global factories are denied basic rights to organise and strike. In the United States, companies use the threat of moving production to China or Mexico to bargain down wages and benefits.

Casino economies. One of the pillars of the most recent wave of economic globalisation has been pressure from the U.S. government, the World Bank and other global agencies, on poorer governments to open up their stock and financial markets to foreign capital. While offering new profit opportunities to the global investing elite of the world, these measures are turning Third World economies into casinos vulnerable to the whims of the twenty-somethings who manage the world's mutual and other investment funds.

Environmental plunder. The Post's series applauds the growth strategies of China, Chile, Indonesia and the Philippines, but fails to mention that in each of these countries "development" has been centred on some combination of tearing down forests, over fishing, rapid depletion of minerals and poisoning of land by agri-chemicals.

The long-term costs of this brand of growth are not factored into the various measures of success, yet the next generations in these countries will spend much of their energy coping with erosion, depleted fishing banks and increasingly unproductive soil.

Community collapse. The series equates progress with poor people landing jobs in global factories, entering the cash economy and purchasing that first television set. The first article juxtaposes a poor fishing family in the Philippines with another where the daughters' factory income has opened to the family the wonders of the country's sparkling new malls.

No doubt economic globalisation has offered this path to millions of people. Yet many of the rural communities that are bypassed or undermined by globalisation were well-functioning social units where hundreds of millions of subsistence farmers and fisher folk have earned a livelihood for decades. While poor in terms of cash income, these communities often score high in terms of nutrition, social peace and even education.

A few people land jobs in the large corporate fishing fleets and agribusiness firms that are the engines of globalisation, but many more join the ranks of the hungry unemployed. In this sense, globalisation is destroying viable rural communities.

Democracy in danger. In country after country, policies are adapted to serve the needs of global firms, often undermining stable communities, clean environments and dignified jobs. As corporate contributions become the determining factor in elections the world over, governments' ability to serve the needs of their people diminishes.

The Clinton administration is launching a new spate of initiatives to expand free trade around the world. These will be opposed by a growing international network of organisations of workers, environmentalists, farmers and women. A growing body of evidence suggests that the current route to economic globalisation is not working for most of humanity.

The writer is co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies, a leftist think tank. This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

LETTERS

'Our business is clean'

To the Editor:

FRIDRICK STEIN, from Germany, wrote a letter "Clean business needed" (Jordan Times, March 1, 1997) complaining about the lack of good manners, proficiency in foreign languages and tidy appearance of tour guides and drivers. As a result, he said he was not going to send tourists to Jordan but to Israel instead.

I am writing this letter because I find it to be my duty and because I love my country. I am an English-speaking Jordanian tourist guide. I have studied ancient history at the university in England and I took the guiding course at Jordan University; I have been working with tourists for 10 years.

All guides in Jordan have been trained and chosen for the job by the Ministry of Tourism. The guide is his country's ambassador and the tourists can see the country through his eyes, his knowledge and his love for his country. We were taught how to be proud and how to build good relations with our visitors; we were taught to show them our rich country — rich in archaeological treasures, in tradition and in religious heritage.

The tourist guide represents the host country and he (or she) may be the only close, friendly personal contact that visitors might make.

Most of the tourists who come to Jordan are well educated and many of them wrote books about the Kingdom and about the friendliness, the warmth and the honesty of its people.

As far as my experience with drivers in Jordan has shown me, they are very friendly, experienced and safe and they have been tested and chosen for their job by experienced companies like JETT, Alfa and Petra. They are clean and the uniform they wear is a pilot uniform.

Guides and drivers have thousands of good reports sent to their travel agencies by tourists and professors. They cannot rule the tourists and impose drastic control over their moves because all groups that come to Jordan do so through travel agencies and have a complete programme to follow.

So I wonder, aren't there better ways to get cheaper offers than by accusing guides and drivers?

Basem Sabatini,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

هكذا من الأصل

Facts and figures on the Har Homa settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim

The following article was provided by the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem (Jerusalem-Bethlehem http://www.aic.org):

ABU GHNEIM Mountain is located in the Bethlehem District 575,000 dunums (575km2) and part of the lands confiscated by Israel between 1967-1996 351,865 dunums (351.866km2). i.e. 61.2 per cent of the total Bethlehem district).

The lands confiscated on and around Abu Ghneim Mountain is approximately 2.127 km2. These lands predominately belong to Palestinian residents of Beit Sahour, Bethlehem, Umm Touba, Jabal Mukkaber and Sour Baher; approximately 1km2 is claimed by private Jewish owners who have acquired these lands via obscure transactions, some of them dating back to the 1930s.

1967: Abu Ghneim Mountain annexed by Israel for the territorial expansion of Israeli occupied East Jerusalem, together with the villages of Umm Touba, Sour Baher, and parts of Jabal Mukkaber. The mountain, covered by a forest planted by the Jordanian government, is declared "green land" on which construction is prohibited by Israeli law.

1991: Two Israeli companies (Makor, Himanouta) propose the confiscation of the lands of Abu Ghneim Mountain to the Israeli government in order to construct a private housing project (8,500 units).

The Israeli Ministry of Finance issues a confiscation order for "public purpose" (public housing project), and does not approve the private housing project proposed by the companies. The two companies appeal to the High Court and obtain a freeze on the confiscation order.

1993: Israel establishes the permanent military closure of the "green line"; the lands of Abu Ghneim Mountain (located inside annexed East Jerusalem) become out of reach to the communities located in the West Bank (Beit Sahour, Bethlehem).

1995: The dispute between the private Israeli owners and the government is resolved by a High Court decision in favour of the government's "public" housing project (Har Homa settlement). The approved first stage of the project (stage A), includes 6,500 housing units (on 1,850 dunums) for 30,000 settlers.

1996: Completion of the last bureaucratic procedures for final approval (hearing of objections, etc...), and Har Homa is ready for construction.

Bethlehem residents are informed of the additional confiscation of 1,500 dunams for the construction of a new bypass road connecting Gilo settlement with the projected Har Homa settlement.

Strategic importance for Israel

Har Homa settlement will complete the ring of Israeli settlements surrounding occupied East Jerusalem, and cut off Palestinian communities in the West Bank from Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem.

The Har Homa settlement will establish a Jewish majority in the southeast of Jerusalem. Once completed in all its stages, this project will house 50-60,000 settlers; with the existing settlements Gilo, Ramat Rahel, Giv'at Hamatos-Giv'at Arba', and Armon Hanatziv, the Israeli settler population in the area will reach 100,000. The population of the three adjacent Palestinian towns Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala numbers 55,000. Furthermore, the total Palestinian population in the Bethlehem District is 120,000. A Jewish majority in this area will support future Israeli aspirations to annex it to Israeli territory.

Importance of Abu Ghneim Mountain to the Palestinian community

The area of Abu Ghneim is the only remaining territorial connection between the southern West Bank and East Jerusalem. It contains the only lands still available for community expansion and for a solution to the devastating housing shortages which have been a major reason for emigration from the area. (In Umm Touba village, 11 persons currently share a home of four rooms.) Several Christian religious sites (neglected by the Israeli authorities) are located on and around Abu Ghneim Mountain; this area has the potential to become a site of tourism and recreation. The establishment of a new Jewish settlement of 50,000 settlers, in the midst of a Palestinian community of the same size will create a new point of conflict.

In terms of environment, Har Homa will be a hazard. It will mean the destruction of the area's last remaining forests and, and based on the experience of other Israeli settlements, it is very probable that the Palestinian communities will serve as the dumping ground for the settlers' waste.

The Palestinian struggle against Har Homa settlement

In 1991, directly after the confiscation order, Palestinian land owners established the Committee for the Defense of the Lands on Abu Ghneim Mountain. The committee has since then exhausted all measures of legal appeal against the settlement project (objections against confiscation, High Court appeals against the land confiscation and against discriminatory interpretation of "public" purpose, objections against the final design of the settlement plan, etc.). The legal struggle, though unable to reverse the plans, has succeeded in delaying its implementation.

Meanwhile, the committee has lobbied among the Palestinian political leadership to adopt a clear stand of opposition to the Har Homa project. These efforts, though seemingly futile in the beginning, eventually resulted in regular coordination between the East Jerusalem Orient House and the Land Defense Committee. In preparation for the decisive stage of the struggle against the new settlement, the committee conducted a series of public meetings and discussions among the local community and established contacts with international NGOs and supporters abroad.

Now that the legal means for halting Har Homa settlement have expired, only a broad public mobilisation, locally and abroad, can prevent Israel from taking a step which will further perpetuate conflict and suffering in our region.

On Feb. 26, 1997, the Israeli government decided to start construction of 2,500 housing units on Mount Abu Ghneim. Netanyahu has also promised to build 3,500 housing units for Palestinians in Jerusalem. Those promised units, however, are not going to be built in the Mount Abu Ghneim area, but in ten, so far unspecified Arab neighbourhoods of Jerusalem.

Furthermore, there have been no concrete rezoning plans, and since 1967 only 600 housing units have been built for Palestinians in Jerusalem. With all this in mind, Netanyahu's promise seems empty and very unreliable.

The Palestinian Authority, as well as the Israeli left, are warning Netanyahu that a formal decision to start building in Har Homa will result in Palestinian resistance, which will necessarily lead to an escalation of violence. In response, the Israeli government is threatening to react with full force if the Palestinians protest. Palestinian organisations are planning wide spread protest activities.

Arafat appeals for world help

(Continued from page 1)

Abington said.

But he added that the United States believes that bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are "the primary vehicle ... and the best way" to resolve disputes.

The United States and other governments would like to see talks between the two sides resume, he said.

Israel, which was not invited, claimed the meeting violated its peace agreements with the Palestinians, which call for the two sides to take "joint action" to resolve disputes.

Israel's cabinet voted unanimously on Friday to go ahead Monday with construction of the settlement, despite warnings from Israeli intelligence officials that it could lead to violence. The plan has drawn international condemnation.

The cabinet approval came a day after a Jordanian soldier shot and killed seven Israeli schoolgirls on the border between the two countries. The man's relatives said he was mentally unstable and not politically motivated, but Israeli leaders blamed the incident in part on the growing tensions in the region.

Mr. Netanyahu said he was "more determined than ever" to go ahead with the plan.

"No government can allow itself to change its policy because of threats of violence," Netanyahu adviser David Bar-Illan told the Associated Press. "Once a government yields to pressure, it will never be able to do anything unpopular again."

Palestinian leaders have warned of a new uprising should Israel go ahead with the construction plans. "Our people will defend their existence and their land," the speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, Ahmad Qoureia, said Friday.

Mr. Arafat said Saturday that the construction of "Har Homa" would "isolate Jerusalem ... and destroy the peace process."

Israel "must understand that peace and settlements do not go together," he said.

Asked what the Palestinian response would be if Israeli bulldozers start working at Har Homa on Monday as planned, Mr. Arafat said: "I do not know. You have to ask the Palestinian masses."

The housing at Jabal Abu Ghneim completes the ring of concrete that Israel has erected around Jerusalem since occupying the city's eastern half in the 1967 war.

Western officials have been working to prevent the political crisis spilling onto the streets in a repetition of last September's protests against Israeli moves in Arab East Jerusalem.

"What we are facing today from settlements in Holy Jerusalem and in the rest of the Palestinian territories is a plan to destroy the peace process," Mr. Arafat said in Arabic.

Mr. Arafat said the conference had "helped to protect the peace process" but he did not elaborate.

"I call upon the Israeli government to retract its settlement decisions and give the peace process the opportunity it deserves," Mr. Arafat said.

But cabinet secretary Danny Naveh reaffirmed Israel's determination to break ground on Jabal Abu Ghneim.

"The prime minister made clear that work on Har Homa will begin next week," Mr. Naveh told Israel television. "If we bow to threats we will be unable to build in our capital in Jerusalem."

Mr. Naveh accused Mr. Arafat of trying "to create an atmosphere of crisis that may bring imminent violence."

Israel also condemned the international conference in Gaza City as an "act of bad faith" and "insensitive."

"This smacks of a longing of the Palestinians for imposing their point of view upon us, which is contrary to the Oslo accords," said government spokesman Moshe Fogel.

"When the Palestinians define such a conference as one intended to save the peace process, it means they are going outside the framework of the interim agreement, which gives specific channels for settling such disputes," Mr. Fogel added.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Arafat said he called the meeting "for one reason, to rescue the peace process and return it to its natural course."

"We want your support to find a mechanism to ensure true and precise implementation of the (peace) agreements," he said, charging that Israel "has run roughshod over all the signed agreements." The rest of the meeting was closed to the press.

A Palestinian statement afterwards simply noted that the diplomats "supported the full implementation of agreements signed between both sides" and called "for self-control and avoiding violence."

A Palestinian alliance meanwhile called on Palestinians in the occupied territories to escalate their attacks against Israel to block the Jabal Abu Ghneim building

"Resist Israel's plans to build the Jerusalem settlement, fight the occupation forces and the Zionist settlers," the alliance said in a statement addressed to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The alliance, grouping eight groups including the militant Islamic Jihad and Hamas, opposes Israel's 1993 peace deal with the Palestinians.

Alliance groups have claimed several attacks against Israeli targets since 1993 in which scores of Israelis were killed or wounded.

"Let the world hear your voice and your determination to continue the fight against Israel until the liberation of Palestine," the statement said.

"You are not alone in this conflict. You have the support of the Arab and Islamic forces, you have the backing of the Islamic resistance in South Lebanon," the statement said.

It condemned the United States for vetoing a draft resolution by the U.N. Security Council that urged Israel to stop the building of a settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The U.N. General Assembly, by a vote of 130 to two, with two abstentions, called on Israel on Thursday to abandon the planned settlement.

The United States and Israel cast the only negative votes on the resolution, similar to the one vetoed by the United States in the Security Council on March 7.

Israel warned the Palestinians that any violent reaction to the start of work on a Jewish settlement would be met with force.

Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said the cabinet had unanimously agreed in Friday's meeting to push ahead with the work.

"I call on the Arabs to remember that the Har Homa apartments will be built" but that the government also decided to build an equal amount of residences for Arabs in East Jerusalem, army radio quoted Mr. Kahalani as saying.

"If they want to escalate, we have the tools to react," Mr. Kahalani told the radio, adding that if threats were not dealt with now, they will only continue throughout the peace talks with the Palestinians.

"Maybe, maybe, maybe it's better to deal with the threats today, to put all the problems on the table," Mr. Kahalani said.

Egypt: Most-wanted 'terrorists' behind recent bloody attacks

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt said Saturday that three of the most wanted "terrorists" in the country were behind bloody attacks this week in the south that killed 14 people.

"These terrorists have been posted as among the most dangerous of the extremist Gamaa Islamiyyah," a senior police official said.

Police identified them as Mahmoud Abdul Monem Al Farshuti, Anwar Hamed Abbas and Abdul Razak Atteya, leader of the militant group's southern cell.

Photos of the first two were published Saturday on the front page of the Egyptian government daily Al Ahram.

The men are accused of going on a rampage Thursday in Ezbet Daoud village in the Naga Hammadi district of Qena province, 640 kilometres south of Cairo, killing 13 people, then attacking a train, murdering a passenger.

The attacks were the bloodiest in Egypt in more than two years.

Egyptian Interior Minister Al Alfi said they showed "the despair of terrorists ... who now fire indiscriminately against innocen civilians," in remarks Saturday to Al Ahram.

He added that the militants committed the attacks "to obtain new foreign funds after security services succeeded in cutting off their source of financing."

Egypt has blamed Iran and militant organisations outside the country for financing the militancy in Egypt which began in March 1992 and has claimed the lives of 1,162 people.

Police reinforcements backed by armoured vehicles from two neighbouring provinces, including anti-terrorist forces, were dispatched to the area of Qena where they set up checkpoints and searched sugar plantations.

Thursday's attacks were similar to one that claimed the lives of six Copts and two Muslims in the village of Etmaniya on Feb. 24, 1996, when three armed militants stormed the village and opened fire at residents.

U.S. finds limited options in effort to resume Israeli-Palestinian talks

(Continued from page 1)

position that is based on the territorial unity of the West Bank and the Arab identity of East Jerusalem.

Consequently even if the U.S. succeeded to talk Israel into freezing the Jabal Abu Ghneim construction, it would not mean that Washington recognises the Arab identity of East Jerusalem. The American position suggests that the Arab and Israeli claims to East Jerusalem have equal weights and merits. American administration officials did not defend the American position since they believe it is based on Oslo accords.

Yet, Washington is equally aware that the construction could trigger violence. From the American viewpoint, avoiding violence is the main priority.

According to well-informed analysts, one reason, or may be the main reason, that Washington ignored Israeli protests against the U.S. attending Saturday's Gaza meeting was because Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was able so far to prevent violence. The American attendance, consequently, was aimed at supporting the Palestinian restraint from encouraging protests that could trigger violence, they said.

The American official source conceded that the administration was impressed with Mr. Arafat's ability so far to prevent violence. "It is extremely important for the Palestinian (National) Authority (PNA) not to be seen as encouraging violence," the source said.

Both the U.S. and Israel have blamed the PNA and media of instigating violent protests against the opening of new entrance to a tunnel in Arab East Jerusalem last September.

Washington, however, is now taking very seriously Palestinian and Arab opposition to the Jabal Abu Ghneim construction.

Two weeks ago, when Mr. Arafat visited Washington, the U.S. thought that the beginning of further Israeli redeployment in the West Bank would be sufficient to dampen anger over construction in Arab East Jerusalem.

American officials were under the impression, according to well-informed sources, that the Palestinians had no objection to an Israeli redeployment from 10 per cent of the rural areas in the West Bank as part of the first phase.

In fact a Palestinian official accompanying Mr. Arafat when he was in Washington early March told this reporter that an approximate 10 per cent for the first phase was what the PNA had expected to get.

However, the Palestinians were insulted when Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy refused to discuss the scope of redeployment or the Israeli decision with the Palestinians indicating that Israel would unilaterally announce its step. The Palestinians felt that the Israeli position was "humiliating," angering chief Palestinian negotiator Mahmoud Abbas, a senior Palestinian official told Al Ra'i and the Jordan Times.

Administration officials suggested that they do not believe that the scope of the first redeployment is as crucial to the continuity of the peace process as the controversy over the Jabal Abu Ghneimm project. The new position is a reversal of their previous stand that redeployment would push the Arab East Jerusalem issue to the backburner.

Other sources close to the U.S. administration suggested that Israel could communicate its position differently to the Palestinians in the form "of consultation."

To defuse the crisis the U.S. is meanwhile expected to get the Israelis to enter negotiations with the Palestinians to open a seaport and an airport in Gaza and facilitate the entry of Palestinian officials to Arab East Jerusalem.

King visits bereaved families

(Continued from page 1)

After the shooting, Mr. Dakamseh was immediately overpowered by his comrades.

Inhabitants of the Baqoura border area rushed to assist the victims and donate blood.

The King has appointed a veteran security figure to help unravel the motives behind the attack.

The King sent a letter to Mohammad Rasoul Al Keilani, a veteran security chief who headed the General Intelligence Department in most of the 1960s and early 1970s, assigning him the task of directing the investigation into the causes behind the shooting.

"My concern to uncover all the facts and dimensions behind this crime has prompted me to ask you to head and direct the affairs of the investigation in this crime," King Hussein wrote in a letter to Mr. Keilani.

Mr. Keilani, 64, is a trusted confidant of the King. He has also held the post of minister of interior. His last post from 1993 until February 1996 was the King's national security advisor.

"I am sure you share with me... and all members of the honourable Arab Army's armed forces the feelings of pain, shock and shame over the vile crime... by the bullet of a treacherous coward, who has harmed the noble reputation of our army and its honour," the King told Mr. Keilani in the letter.

"We assign you with the task and await the results of a thorough investigation into this crime," the King told Mr. Keilani.

Parliament session ends March 19

(Continued from page 1)

and their members are unlikely to sign the petition unless the government has a real interest in such a session," said the source.

Following the termination of the fourth session of Parliament in March 1993, the opposition could collect only 31 signatures calling for an extraordinary session.

Parliamentary sources hinted that if the opposition succeed in sending in the signed petition for an extraordinary session Parliament will be dissolved before it has the time to submit it as the King has the power to dissolve the Lower House without giving any reasons.

"If an extraordinary session is held, it would request to debate a new election law as well as public freedoms and citizens rights issues in addition to the government's internal and external policies and will present a motion calling for terminating the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty among others," said the source.

During its fourth and last session, the 13th Parliament finalised a number of draft laws related to the economy, including a companies law, the one-person, one-vote election law, an amendment to the State Security Court and discussed government's policies, the issue of Jerusalem and Jewish settlements in the occupied Arab territories.

According to the Constitution, the present Parliament's mandate ends on Nov. 7, 1997. General elections should be held within four months immediately preceding that date. Thus the nearest date for the elections will be July 7, 1997.

Recently there has been talk about the dissolution of the present Parliament before the end of its term to give the government time to pass a package of laws which it could not pass during the parliamentary session. There has been also a hint about amending the present elections law after the dissolution of Parliament.

The opposition in Parliament has already expressed its strong opposition to the dissolution of the legislature before its term ends and threatened to carry the case to the Supreme Court to fight such a decision if it is taken.

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Kabariti opens Saudi trade fair, describes ties with Riyadh as very strong

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti Saturday opened a Saudi Arabian trade fair at the International Exhibitions Centre and expressed his deep satisfaction with the Saudi products on display for six days.

Speaking on Jordan Television after the opening ceremony, Mr. Kabariti described the Saudi fair as a real source of pride to the Arab Nation and as a major pillar in Arab industry and economy.

Describing Jordanian-Saudi Arabian ties as very strong, the prime minister said the fair was bound to further bolster economic relations between the two countries.

The fair is an advanced step towards overcoming obstacles in inter-Arab trade and towards cancelling trade protocols to open the way for free trade among the Arab countries, Mr. Kabariti added.

On display by 70 Saudi Arabian firms are plastic and pharmaceutical and medical products, foodstuffs, boilers, mineral oil, lamps, pipes chemicals, furniture, metal sheets, and paper products among other items.

Attending the opening ceremony was Saudi Arabian Industry Minister Hashem Abdullah Yamani and Jordan's Industry and Trade Minister Ali Abul Ragheb.

In remarks after the ceremony, Mr. Abul Ragheb said that Jordanian-Saudi Arabian relations are progressing in an excellent manner and that Jordan for its part, will do all it can to open free trade with the Arab countries in general and Saudi Arabia in particular and to create a free trade zone for all the Arab states. The Saudi minister expressed appreciation to Jordan for hosting the trade fair which, he said, was bound to strengthen Jordanian-Saudi Arabian cooperation in economic and trade fields.

The Saudi Arabian business delegation accompanying the Saudi minister were present at the opening ceremony along with Jordanian officials.

Mr. Kabariti earlier received Mr. Yamani at his office and reviewed with him bilateral ties and cooperation in economic and trade fields as well as issues of common concern to the two countries.

The first Saudi fair here is the latest sign of an improvement in relations between Amman and Riyadh. Relations between the two countries have been improving markedly in recent months with Jordan's exports to Saudi Arabia rising from $100 million in 1995 to nearly $160 million during the first 11 months of last year, according to figures released in Amman by the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Following the opening ceremony, Mr. Abul Ragheb and his Saudi counterpart addressed a press conference stressing the desire of both sides to promote trade exchanges between them.

Mr. Abul Ragheb said the increased trade exchanges in the last two years reflects the progress in ties and opens the door for businessmen from the two countries to carry out joint investment schemes.

Noting that the items on display are of very high quality, the minister said that the 43 Saudi businessmen delegation will be holding talks with their Jordanian counterparts to further enhance trade and economic relations.

Mr. Abul Ragheb indicated that Saudi Arabia and Jordan are currently linked by a trade protocol which allows certain goods from the two sides to be exchanged free of duty. He added that such strong links are bound to pave the ground for the creation of a free trade zone among the Arab states by the year 2010.

Prime Minister Kabariti and Saudi Minister Yamani cut the ribbon signalling the start of the fair (Petra photo)

Asia in search of a model for financial integration

HONG KONG (AFP) — With the growing interpenetration of their economies, and mounting intraregional trade, Asian countries recognise the need for financial integration but are still a long way from achieving it.

This need was highlighted at a conference organised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), which looked at the financial integration of Asia and the role of Hong Kong.

The Central Bank of Hong Kong, second only to Japan as Asia's leading central financier and by far the most international, has long been a passionate advocate of cooperation among regional monetary authorities.

IMF regional Director General Michel Camdessus, who admits to devoting a growing part of his time to Asia, the fundamental issue is to put in place institutions and mechanisms to guarantee the financial stability of a region that pulls world growth.

But financial globalisation and liberalisation considerably increase the risks of mishaps such as in Mexico and Thailand.

It was the 1994-1995 Mexican peso crisis that "heightened the necessity of close cooperation among Asian countries in order to prevent a financial crisis and subsequent contagion," said Bank of Korea governor Kyung Shik Lee.

The most promising initiative, he said, was EMEAP, a group of 11 Asia-Pacific central banks set up in 1991. But progress has so far been slow. Its governors only met for the first time last year and it has yet to appoint a permanent secretariat.

For Gerald Corrigan, a former governor of the New York Federal Reserve and now with U.S. investment house Goldman Sachs and Co., "there should be a regular forum in which all of the central bank governors and all the finance ministers should meet separately and jointly on an annual basis."

But there is no consensus in Asia on what he calls "a credible and effective institutional framework."

According to Anwar Ibrahim, the Malaysian deputy prime minister and finance minister, the problem is not the creation of new forums.

"The ASEAN finance ministers meeting in Phuket last week should be viewed not as an attempt at the formation of a new financial bloc," he said.

For him, it is necessary to reinforce regional cooperation on concrete arrangements such as setting up an advance warning system of potential crises, exchanging information on political and economic developments, and putting in place systems for sound payments and cooperation on exchange markets.

But in practice, financial integration in Asia must overcome numerous obstacles such as differences in the degree of maturity, the legal and regulatory framework, the technical level of systems of transactions and payment, bank supervision, and widely different national financial sustems.

Mr. Anwar's model of financial integration would not be, for example, a carbon copy of that in Europe which is aiming to reach economic and monetary union in 1999.

"The economic and financial integration in Asia can be seen as unique in the sense that it is not based on a high degree of convergence," said Dai Xianglong, the governor of the People's Bank of China, China's central bank.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 15/03/97 18:48

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1 -	1.6939	0.6259	1.4568	123.50	1.3650	1689.43	1.9057	5.7106
DE Mark	0.5904	-	0.3691	0.8600	72.89	0.8085	996.96	1.1249	3.3709
GB Sterling	1.5970	2.7145	-	2.3369	197.35	2.1010	2699.37	3.0449	9.1242
CH Franc	0.6864	116.20	0.4291	-	84.74	0.9363	1158.89	130.78	3.9172
JP Yen	0.0081	1.3710	0.5062	1.1791	-	1.1048	13.67	154.25	4.6220
CA Dollar	0.7326	1.2429	0.4572	1.0689	1.10	-	1236.58	1.3967	4.1937
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0021	0.3700	0.0862	1370.05	0.8075	-	11.27	3.3781
NL Guilder	0.5247	88.86	0.3281	78.45	84.76	0.7161	888.28	-	2.9958
FR Franc	0.1751	0.2965	0.1095	25.5020	21.60	0.2389	33.36	33.3600	-

Energy

Oils	Last	Previous
Brent	10.50	19.20
W. Texas	21.25	20.80
Bony	19.50	19.20
Dubai	10.28	18.25
UL Gas	201.00	200.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4510	0.16680	0.38874	32.9457
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46138	0.1704	0.39692	33.6395
KW Dinar	3.2982	5.58971	2.08398	4.80769	407.498
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.49438	1.6603	3.86698	327.761
CY Pound	1.9679	3.3334	1.2309	2.8668	243.036

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	352.25	352.75
Silver (oz's)	5.25	5.27
Platinum (oz's)	381.75	382.75
AL (3 Months)	1668	1672
CU (3 Months)	2360	2385
Zinc (3 Months)	1285	1290
Lead (3 Months)	688	692
NI (3 Months)	8110	8140

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period / C'ncy	-1- Month	-3- Months	-6- Months	-9- Months	-1- Year
USD	5.34	5.46	5.02	5.81	5.98
GBP	6.08	6.25	6.19	6.38	6.58
JPY	0.36	0.53	0.50	0.43	0.42
DEM	3.18	3.16	3.18	3.12	3.30
FRF	3.20	3.28	3.34	3.39	3.45
CHF	1.83	1.80	1.80	1.82	1.82
ITL	7.33	7.28	7.17	7.11	7.06

Main Equity Indicies

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	6935.46	56.57	0.82	6958.63	6878.51	6878.89
Newyork	S&P 500	793.17	3.61	0.46	796.88	789.56	789.56
London	FT-SE 100	4424.3	28.6	0.6	4424.3	4351	4397.7
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	17923.64	23.10	0.13	17940.3	17616.8	17900.5
Paris	CAC 40	2645.62	13.52	0.51	2648.44	2582.12	2632.1
Frankfurt	DAX	3358.29	9.48	0.28	3359.29	3321.32	3349.81

Energy

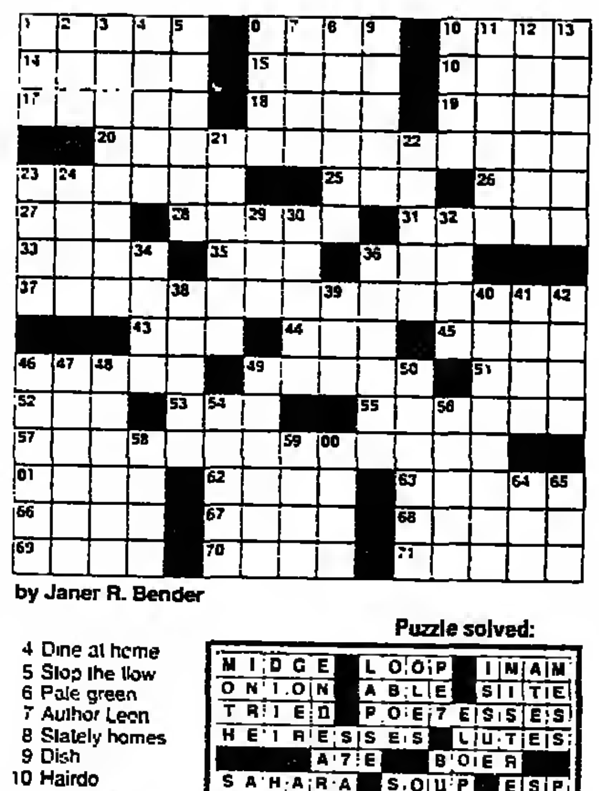
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	191.57	Spot
Cocoa ($/ton)	1463	Spot
Sugar ($/ton)	0	Spot
Wheat ($/ton)	150	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	23.6	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	132	Spot
Barley ($/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice ($/ton)	500	Spot

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1301	1.1358
DE Mark	0.4177	0.4196
CH Franc	0.4853	0.4877
FR Franc	0.1237	0.1243
JP Yen	0.5717	0.5748
NL Guilder	0.3712	0.3731
IT Lira	0.4186	0.4207

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

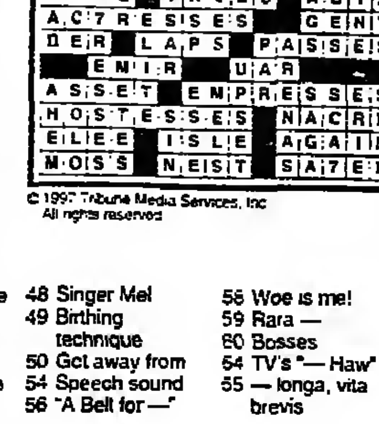


by Janet R. Bender

ACROSS
1 Campfire residue
6 Respond quickly
10 Price
14 Old English coin
15 Inland sea
16 Sandwich cookie
17 Big vessel
18 Actress Merrill
19 Musical group
20 Jackie Gleason movie role
23 Bracket for candles
25 Sleep cycle letters
26 Pedal digit
27 Play on words
28 Corn covers
31 Auguries
33 Israeli statesman
35 Actress Charlotte
36 Genetic letters
37 Beach Boys' hit
43 Dianst Anais
44 Over there, to a poet
45 Unauthorized disclosure
46 Doha's nation
49 Cut open
51 Mole
52 Prefix for verse or corn
53 Dam builder
55 Go by
57 Dunaway-Scott film
61 Lanky
62 Greet, in a way
63 Russian villa
66 Operatic solo
67 Singer Pinza
68 Go in
69 Lip
70 Not as much
71 Prescribed amounts

DOWN
1 Turkish leader
2 Theater sign
3 Of a body substance
4 Dine at home
5 Stop the flow
6 Pale green
7 Author Leon
8 Stately homes
9 Dish
10 Hairdo
11 Very fancy
12 Church officer
13 Throws
21 Nerve cell
22 In the midst of
23 Exceptional: abbr.
24 Castro's land
29 Patriotic org.
30 Nairobi's nation
32 Letters
34 1492 vessel
36 Ballerina
38 Narrow inlet, in Scotland
39 Charged particle
40 Admires
41 Pool lengths
42 Actress Ione
46 Civil rights issue
47 Asian capital
48 Singer Mel
49 Birthing technique
50 Get away from
54 Speech sound
56 "A Bell for —"
58 Woe is me!
59 Rara —
60 Bosses
64 TV's "— Haw"
65 — longa, vita brevis

Puzzle solved:



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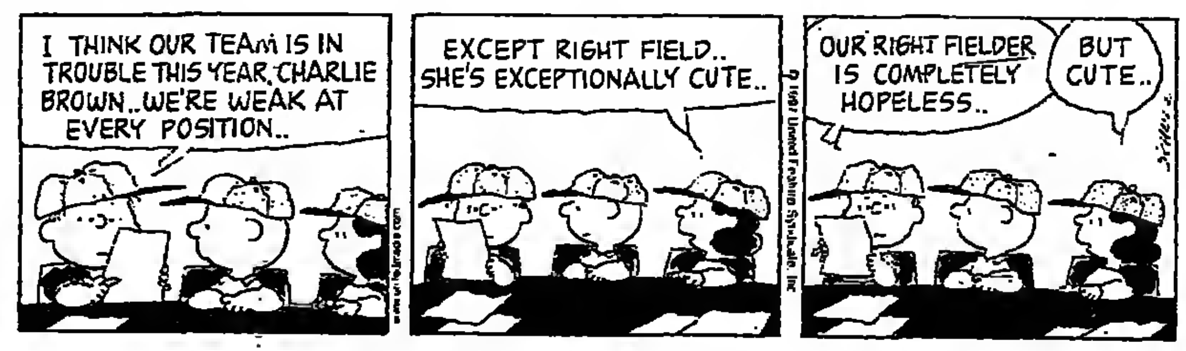
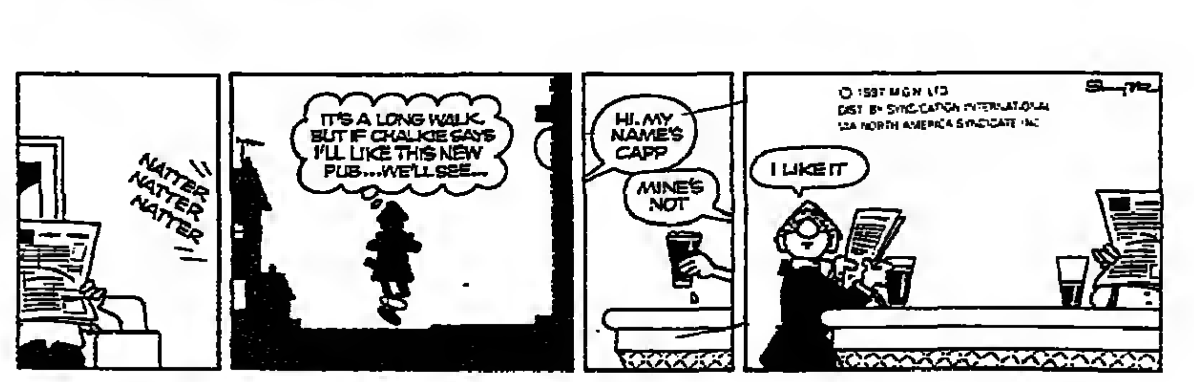
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 1997
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Get your talents today before new fellow associates and thereby you can gain the attention from a bigwig. Get busy later this evening and keep the promises you bave made to your loved ones, so you can gain their respect.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Plan time today to do whatever you have promised to family ties. Don't get into any disagreements or you could find that there could be great tension between you all. This is a good time to go out on the town with friends.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Don't answer letters or communications speedily today, since you could provide the incorrect information which may prove to be disastrous. Later this evening make this time romantic with your loved one and spend much time together.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) If you go to a financial expert today, double cbeck the advice give to assure its accuracy. Have fun with hobbies later this evening and thereby you will relieve the stress which could be present from all business activities.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be careful in trying to solve a difficult situation in the morning. Make real progress through wise channels and you can consult with those in authority to see if you are proceeding in a successful direction.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't rush through puzzling difficulties or you could miss some important steps which could make your efforts successful or make all your career activities useless. Later this evening stay at home with your loved ones.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Make sure you understand today what a close friend expects of you and then you can handle it correctly, thereby you won't make a fool of yourself. Later this evening you can meet with knowledgeable people and gain much advice.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Follow the orders today of higher-ups so that you don't make any miscalculations whicb could be embarrassing in the days ahead. The evening is fine for relaxing and being with good friends who you wish to see.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Get into a new enterprise today in a sure and confident manner which will make your efforts very successful. Follow the advice of an influential person, who has the ability to see through any situation and make the right suggestions.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Handle a responsibility early today and then you will have more time to relax with your loved ones. Talk your aims over with an expert in business matters and thereby you can gain the success which you desire.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) An outside fellow associate has much to say today which should be listened to and follow to the letter. Forget that worldly enterprise at this time and concentrate on matters concerning your loved ones and close friends.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Plan how today to get more accomplished at your regular activities and make this day quite successful for your loved ones. Come to a better understanding at career activities and seek the suggestions from knowledgeable people

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Jordanians want to be main contractors for big projects financed by World Bank

** SULTAN ZU'BI. member of the board and spokesman of the Contractors' Association, told a representative of the World Bank that his institution places unacceptable terms on big projects in order to keep local contractors away from such major tenders. He pointed to many construction jobs in Jordan, such as the Ras Al Naqab project for which the World Bank requested Jordanian contractors to have implemented jobs valued at $250 million during the past five years in order to qualify for the tender. "As this was an impossible condition, all Jordanian contractors did not qualify for submitting offers and the project went to an Italian company," Mr. Zu'bi explained.

The World Bank representative, whose name was given only as Mr. Terry, told the Jordanian contractors during a meeting with them that the bank prefers to deal with major contractors for large projects to ensure good performance and implementation and timely execution of the jobs. The World Bank official said foreign contractors are usually employed when Jordanian contractors do not meet the "specifications."

Mr. Zu'bi responded that the same Italian company which was awarded the tender, had itself sub-contracted a large portion of the work on Jordanian companies which should have been awarded the original contract.

Another example given by Mr. Zu'bi was the Karameh Dam which was awarded to the same Italian company under the same circumstances of the Ras Al Naqab tender. He said that the association has recently learnt that some work was sub-contracted to Jordanian contractors who are now executing the project. "This shows that the Jordanian contractor is capable of implementing these projects if given the opportunity," Mr. Zu'bi stressed.

Suhail Majali, another board member of the association, told the representative of the World Bank that the foreign companies resort to hiking the prices of materials and minimising the cost of erection because it knows beforehand that it will be sub-contracting these functions to local firms. As such, Mr. Majali pointed out, the foreign company acquires the lion's share of the profits.

Other contractors spoke during the meeting and they all stressed the desire of the association to enable Jordanian contractors participate in large projects financed by the World Bank (Al Ra'i).

Arab Bank postpones giving free bonus shares

** AL RA'I has learnt that the Arab Bank's board of directors has recommended to the general assembly the distribution of cash dividends to the shareholders at a rate of 40 per cent. The percentage translates into JD17.66 million. An Arab Bank official confirmed that the board has postponed distributing free share bonuses until a 15 per cent capitalisation tax is totally abolished. The bank was considering doubling its capital to JD88 million by capitalising a portion of the reserves and retained earnings.

According to the balance sheet and the profit and loss statement as of Dec. 31, 1996, the Arab Bank has generated a JD95.7 million net profit last year, 19.63 per cent higher than the JD80.46 million net profit posted at the end of 1995. The bank's total assets increased to JD10,340 million and shareholders' equity grew to JD630 million at the end of last year.

The results of the Arab Bank Group at the end of last year were:

1. Net profit of $198 million, 17.7 per cent higher than the 1995 figure.
2. $15.9 billion in total assets (excluding off-balance sheet items).
3. $1,402.5 million net shareholders equity.
4. 16 per cent capital adequacy ratio.

(Al Ra'i).

Banking is one of Jordan's most active and sophisticated sectors

This is the second of a two-part presentation given by Mufleh Akel, senior manager at the Arab Bank head office in Amman, at a conference on "Opportunities for Investment in the Mediterranean Region" that was held in London last week.

The role of the Jordanian banking sector

WHILE THE role of banking in the economy is declining in some industrial countries, banks continue to dominate the financial systems in most developing countries and other countries in the transitional stages, such as Jordan. A reliable banking system is necessary because of the imperative role it plays in the economy: Intermediation, maturity transformation, payment and credit allocation.

Financial institutions also carry heavy responsibilities in the process of economic reform and transformation. These include fine pricing of banking products and expansion in extending long-term loans.

Of course, banks also continue to play an important intermediary role in facilitating the pooling of domestic savings, attracting foreign investment and directing it to the most efficient, productive and profitable projects.

Two examples of such performance are the mixed finance packages put together for the $170 million Indo-Jordan Phosphoric Acid project and the $85 million Nippon-Jordan Fertiliser project. In both cases, local banks pooled resources with international agencies, foreign export credit agencies, and a group of international banks to get these projects off the ground.

Banking is one of the Jordanian economy's most active and sophisticated sectors. It continues to achieve impressive growth and improvements in quality of services, while providing Jordan's growing economy with adequate amounts of credit in addition to the necessary financial and banking services.

Today, the Jordanian banking sector consists of 14 commercial banks and seven investment banks plus several specialised credit institutions that support the domains of housing, real estate, industry and agriculture.

The present structure of the Jordanian banking sector is partly the result of government policies aimed at creating specialised institutions with the purpose of extending subsidised credit to certain sectors of the economy.

Commercial banks, however, continue to dominate other financial institutions in Jordan in terms of the size of deposits and total assets. These banks also remain the main source of credit in the market due to the absence of competition from other institutions or lenders.

Through a network totalling more than 430 branches, Jordan's 14 commercial banks conduct all lending activities including short, medium- and long-term loans for all purposes, including the financing of seasonal, working capital requirements and the acquisition of fixed assets.

The following figures reflect he size of the banking sector in Jordan and its development over the past four decades:

(In $ millions)

	1965	1975	1985	1995
Number of banks	8	10	14	21
Number of banks' branches	25	77	243	430
Total assets of banks	93	356	2535	8675
Total banking deposits	44	169	1747	2788
Outstanding credit	33	127	1274	3706

Among the commercial banks operating in Jordan, Arab Bank is considered the largest with a market share of more than 33 per cent in terms of total assets. It is the only bank, which has, in addition to its strong local standing, a solid regional and international presence, enabling it to exercise a significant role in financing trade and investment.

The performance of the whole financial system was further enhanced by the establishment of the Amman Financial Market in 1978. Since then, it has expanded its operations and become one of the most active emerging markets in the Middle East region.

Jordan's financial system has expanded considerably over the past 25 years, as evidenced by the increase in the ratio of M2 (money and quasi money) to GDP from 60 per cent in 1970 to over 100 per cent in the late 1980s, and about 115 per cent in the 1990s.

Since 1989, the financial system has been subject to significant reform designed to address weaknesses and adverse effects of the difficult 1980s.

These reforms have been successful, aided by the government's macroeconomic reforms and liberalisation programmes which succeeded in stabilising the economy. Stabilisation and the unexpected inflow of funds into the country in the wake of the Gulf crisis in the early 1990s, led to a boom in the Jordanian economy. This boom boosted the overall profitability of the financial institutions.

One major problem facing the Jordanian financial market is fragmentation. The market is divided into several compartments, functioning individually and in isolation from each other, by laws, regulations and special privileges extended to some institutions. This fragmentation negatively affects the market's efficiency and competition. It also limits the financial institutions' potential for growth. Ongoing reform of the financial sector, which will fundamentally change its current structure, will most likely result in a more competitive and efficient industry.

Although the banking system is deeper now than ever before, it is still dominated by a small number of domestic banks. The variety of financial instruments for users and providers of funds is also rather limited. For example, municipal bonds, commercial papers and certificates of deposit are not active or available. Total bonds are very minimal; the only non-government bonds are corporate bonds of which the total outstanding amounted to only JD 4 million by November 1996, with negligible trading. The capital market, with the exception of the stock exchange, is thin.

Like its counterparts in many other developing countries, the Jordanian financial system is challenged to fund the most efficient investments, while, at the same time, managing risks and integrating with the world financial markets.

The banking system in Jordan has been effectively intermediating short-term savings and long-term financing requirements. Total outstanding credit facilities of commercial banks increased from 20 per cent of GDP in 1970 to more than 72 per cent of GDP in 1996, reflecting a strong deepening of private sector financing. Additionally, the role of the specialised credit institutions expanded considerably. Total loans extended by these credit institutions reached 20 per cent of GDP in 1996 compared to seven per cent in the 1970s.

A shift from cash preference to time and saving deposits was reflected in the tremendous increase in banking deposits, which — in local and foreign currencies — reached 125 per cent of GDP by the end of 1996 (76 per cent of GDP for deposits denominated in local currency).

Reforming the industry

Mobilising funds to finance development depends mainly on the safety and efficiency of the banking system. The banks' ability to attract savings through creative plans, while investing those funds within the most convenient, safe and productive channels, also is critical. Therefore, the banking sector was the first sector of the economy to be the focus of reforms. The first phase of reforms of the Jordanian banking sector, during the period 1989 to the present, addressed such areas as:

* Capital adequacy
* Reinforcement of capital base
* Credit concentrations
* Floating interest rates
* Replacing direct with indirect supervision
* Encouraging merger operations to create larger units
* Freedom to lend in local and foreign currencies
* Full disclosure
* Elimination of credit ceilings

Authorities are still considering further reforms to develop and deepen the domestic financial market in order to promote the mobilisation of savings and to integrate Jordan with the world financial markets.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 15/03/1997

	PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	269.000	205.000	ARAB BANK	14.0	1.17	37	700	179450	259.50	256.25	1.25-
N	2.300	1.900	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	F	0.00	17	5550	10873	1.96	1.95	.01-
♦	3.850	2.900	BANK OF JORDAN	10.4	0.00	4	1100	1187	2.97	2.88	.09-
	1.210	.880	MID.EAST INV.BK.	66.3	0.00	11	9300	9110	1.01	1.01	-
	5.350	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	17.4	2.97	7	7258	31148	4.65	4.65	-
	2.950	2.440	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	19.8	0.00	11	1142	3660	2.74	[illegible]	.01-
	1.090	.840	JOR.GULF BANK	5.1	8.24	2	2800	2398	.86	.85	.01-
	3.870	3.450	ARAB JOR.INV.BK.	19.3	0.00	1	750	2700	3.65	3.60	.05-
	1.440	1.000	PHILADEL.INV.BK.	9	0.00	5	2800	3356	1.20	1.19	.01-
	BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 194.54 %CHG: -1.03			94	31680	248913			
	2.770	1.830	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	10.51	1	2200	4180	1.92	1.90	.02-
	INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 119.46 %CHG: -0.11			2	2270	4262			
	1.830	1.450	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	11.1	7.16	8	1168	1742	1.64	1.63	.01-
	6.950	6.000	VHCLS. OWNERS FED.	11.7	5.78	1	150	995	6.31	6.63	.32+
	1.050	.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	22.4	1.69	2	950	859	1.01	1.01	-
	.800	.410	MACH.EQP.RENT.MAIN.	g	0.00	1	50	23	.46	.45	-
	10.250	7.600	ALIA'I	9.1	6.19	1	100	710	7.90	7.70	.20-
	3.720	2.130	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	17.7	6.75	3	1200	3725	3.30	3.20	.10-
	1.220	.960	ZARKA EDUCATION	0	0.00	1	220	198	.98	.99	.01-
♦	2.230	1.690	UNIFIED CO.	8.0	6.55	13	5970	10033	1.73	1.68	.05-
	SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 104.87 %CHG: -1.09			30	9318	17844			
	3.730	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.2	2.81	16	12055	42540	3.53	3.53	-
	6.100	4.950	ARAB POTASH CO.	18.3	1.32	2	4600	28053	6.10	6.03	.07-
	10.400	8.720	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	10.3	7.88	5	1472	14941	10.15	10.15	-
	1.590	1.150	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	61.1	0.00	2	1520	2066	1.39	1.39	-
	4.140	3.040	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	20.6	5.33	25	5647	21168	3.76	3.75	.01-
♦	2.310	1.570	JOR.PIPES MANFCT.	8.6	5.74	2	1300	2025	1.60	1.55	.05-
	6.650	4.250	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	11.1	4.19	1	[illegible]	29119	4.78	4.78	-
	5.480	3.130	ARAB ALUM.IND.	8.7	9.17	1	450	1481	3.29	3.29	-
	.960	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	g	0.00	14	65400	37409	.57	.58	.01+
	1.400	1.060	ARAB PAPER CONV.TRD.	[illegible]	9.16	4	2850	3233	1.14	1.13	.01-
	1.520	1.130	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	g	0.00	1	26100	29540	1.13	1.14	.01+
	1.020	.540	NATIONAL INDS.	9.5	9.38	2	1100	694	.64	.64	-
♦	5.000	4.750	JOR.CHEM.INDS.	27.5	4.43	1	5200	22550	4.75	4.61	.14-
	3.250	2.280	UNIV.CHEM.INDS.	71.3	0.00	1	150	[illegible]	2.41	[illegible]	.09-
	2.740	1.440	UNIV. MODN.INDS.	5.0	12.30	13	6100	10011	1.67	1.64	.01-
	1.820	1.140	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	16.4	0.00	31	23700	31204	1.33	1.31	.02-
	1.270	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	23.9	0.00	8	2850	2508	.88	.88	-
	2.400	1.750	EL-ZAY READY WEAR	P	0.00	7	8500	16689	1.82	1.84	.02+
	1.470	.930	UNION CH. VEG.	23.9	0.00	1	1000	970	.97	.97	-
	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 118.26 %CHG: -0.52			176	166374	291974			
	GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 153.75 %CHG: -0.82			302	209592	563012			

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 15/01.1997

	HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	.790	.480	JOR.TRADE FAC.	11.1	0.00	1	250	173	.48	.49	.01+
	.850	.680	UNION INV. 50	-6.0	0.00	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	.70	.69	.01-
	.840	.370	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	g	0.00	11	11190	4931	.40	.41	.01+
N			AL-SHARQ INV. 75%	5	0.00	1	200	140	1.00	.95	.05-
	.640	.200	JOR.INDS.MATCH-JEMCO	g	0.00	6	7400	1594	.21	.22	.01+
	.740	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	E	0.00	5	2111	1230	.59	.58	.01-
	1.590	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	5	0.00	4	2800	3892	1.39	1.39	-
	.690	.440	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	9	0.00	9	16700	7370	.44	.44	-
♦	.790	.510	NATL. TEXTILE	g	0.00	4	1050	535	.51	.50	.01-
	.850	.400	NATL.MULT.ENG.NAMICO	E	0.00	18	26250	11075	.42	.42	-
	.990	.720	JORDAN STEEL	E	0.00	2	5300	2972	.74	.74	-
	.700	.430	ARAB ELECT.INDS.	P	0.00	2	550	281	.51	.51	-
	.750	.600	MIDEAST PHARM. 75%	E	0.00	2	11000	3960	.62	.81	.01-
	1.330	.960	UNION TOBACCO 75%	E	0.00	1	100	71	.95	.96	-
	.670	.390	INDS. ENG.	75.9	0.00	5	2450	1029	.42	.42	-
	1.120	.760	INDS. CERAMIC	8	0.00	1	2000	1540	.76	.77	.01+
	.950	.530	MID.EAST COMPLEX	8.9	0.00	11	128400	98621	.74	.78	.02+
	GRAND TOTAL					154	236107	142585			

♦ : New 12 monthe low
N : Listed during the past 12 months
P : P/E ratio is 100 or more
g : Negative P/E
E : Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

OMPET

VURCE

MEANIA

GNININ

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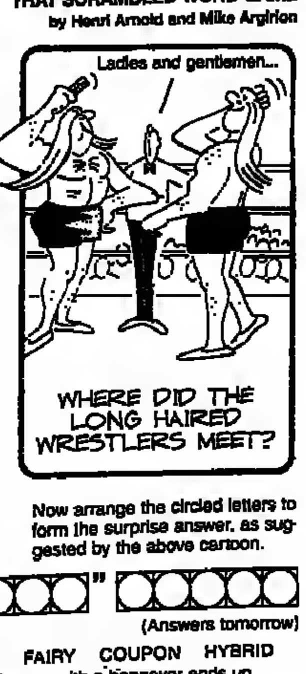

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: AT THE " " (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: NOBLE FAIRY COUPON HYBRID
Answer: What a lawyer with a hangover ends up with — THE BURDEN OF "PROOF"

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Sporting world's oldest trophy destroyed

AUCKLAND (AFP) — A man appeared in the Auckland district court briefly Saturday to face a charge of wilfully destroying the sporting world's oldest trophy, yachting's 146-year-old America's Cup.

The trophy was badly damaged in a frenzied attack by a sledgehammer wielding man Friday who claimed to be acting in the cause of indigenous Maori sovereignty.

The prosecution alleged that Benjamin Peri Nathan, 27, "wilfully destroyed a trophy being the America's Cup valued at an amount yet to be specified being the property of the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron."

Nathan was also charged with unlawfully entering a building with an intent to commit a crime.

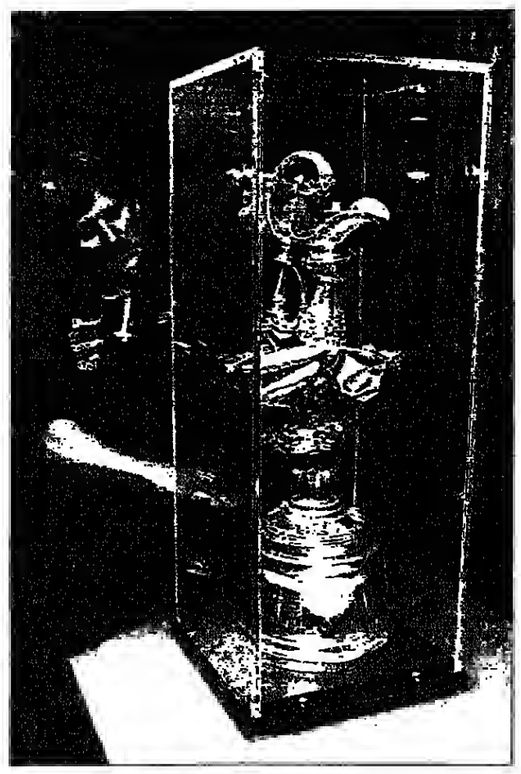
His lawyer, Lorraine Smith, told judge Barry Barnes that although her client was not needed to plead Saturday he would be entering a plea of not guilty. She said Nathan would not be seeking bail.

Barnes initially remanded the defendant to April 18 and ordered a psychiatric report be prepared on him.

But Smith strongly opposed the reporting, saying: "If a report is ordered my client will not speak to the psychiatrist."

"This was a political act for political reasons."

After a brief in-chambers hearing Barnes cancelled the order for the psychiatric report.



Sir Peter Blake, 1995 Team New Zealand's syndicate head, sits next to the America's Cup after the world's oldest trophy was damaged by a sledgehammer-wielding man at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron in Auckland March 14 (Reuters photo)

Nathan was only in court briefly and said nothing. Only reporters and a few onlookers were present for the hearing and unusually, for a Maori sovereignty case, there were no indigenous protesters or supporters present.

A previously unknown group, Tino Rangatiratanga Liberation Organisation, had faxed news organisations Friday after the attack, claiming responsibility for it.

"Our first act of defiance will be the destruction of a national monument of great significance," the fax said.

Haddad outlines ABC '97 agenda; lauds Alkhas' participation in Asian All-Star team

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's Zeid Alkhas will join the All-Star team of the Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) when they play against a Korean team in a match scheduled to take place June 18-22 in Seoul, South Korea.

ABC Vice President Awwad Haddad said players representing seven Asian countries will take part in the match.

"The ABC requested the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) to name a Jordanian player to join the All-Star team," Haddad told the Jordan Times Saturday.

He said the basketball federations of Jordan and Iran were asked to name a player representing the ABC West Asia Zone which also includes Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

The JBF named Zeid Alkhas to be on the All-Star team and Mahmoud Sha'ban as a substitute.

Alkhas, a member of Al Ahli's team, had been chosen to the All-Star team in the Asian Junior Championship in the Philippines in 1994. Sha'ban, a member of the country's basketball champs Al Orthodoxi, was on the same team who clinched the Asian bronze medal and became the first of the Kingdom's teams to qualify to a World Championship.

Both players are currently continuing their higher education in the United States.

Haddad said it was a great achievement for the Kingdom to have such distinguished players and a chance to put Jordan on the map of Asian basketball.

He noted that the ABC will cover all expenses during the players' stay in the Korean capital.

On the other hand, Haddad noted that the ABC is preparing for its upcoming events set in the 1997 agenda.

"A busy schedule awaits the ABC as we have the Champions Cup scheduled to take place in Jakarta, Indonesia in July; the 19th Asian Championship in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and the women's championship in Bangkok, Thailand."

Haddad said that JBF had recently informed the ABC that the women's team would not participate in the 17th women's championship in April.

Jordan's was the first Arab country to take part in the championship in 1995 and was welcomed by the ABC.

"Jordan's participation in all Asian championship events is very important," Haddad said. "All expenses are covered by the ABC leaving only travel costs to Bangkok, but the JBF has unfortunately declined to participate."

Meanwhile Haddad said that Jordan, Syria and Iran will compete in the men's pre-qualifiers for the Asia Championship scheduled to take place in Riyadh in September.

Iraq and Lebanon have not yet sent their confirmation.

"We are awaiting Iraq and Lebanon to join the qualifiers for the Asian championship," he said.

He said that Syria had announced that their willingness to host the qualifiers in the case only three teams are participating.

"We will study all the offers presented by each federation and the ABC will then decide who will host the qualifiers in May," he said.

Muster, Chang set for semifinal showdown

INDIAN WELLS, California (R) — Second seed Thomas Muster of Austria, unafraid of Mark Philippoussis's supersonic serve, picked apart the Australian's game Friday to earn a semifinal showdown with Michael Chang at the Champions Cup.

Muster's 6-3 7-6 (10-8) quarter-final win gave him his third semifinal in four tournaments played this year and another chance to show his muscle over Chang, the defending champion and third seed.

Muster has an impressive 5-1 career edge over the American, including a victory at the Champions Cup in 1995.

"I'm excited for tomorrow," Chang said. "Thomas is always a tough competitor. I'm going to be pumped up to play him. I'm looking to even things up a bit, to be honest."

The third-ranked Chang needed only 73-minutes to move into the semifinals with a 6-3 6-2 win over 30th-ranked Cedric Pioline of France.

The other semifinal will be contested by two unlikely and unseeded players — 35th-ranked Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden and 43rd-ranked Bohdan Ulihrach of the Czech Republic.

The serve-and-volleying Bjorkman dismissed 14th seed Alberto Berasategui of Spain 6-2 6-3 in the quarter-finals. Ulihrach, who knocked out top seed Pete Sampras in the second round, beat 50th-ranked Byron Black of Zimbabwe 6-4 6-2 in the quarter-finals.

The consummate clay court artisan, Muster's talents on hardcourt are often ignored. But he has won two hardcourt tournaments, the most recent a few weeks ago in Dubai.

"People say that he's obviously one of the best clay courters," Philippoussis said. "But, gee, looks like he plays pretty good on hardcourt as well."

Philippoussis is nicknamed "Scud" in deference to his missile-like serve.

But take away the serve and the Australian is vulnerable — especially to a player like Muster, who has way too much confidence to run for cover.

"Philippoussis is what I expected, mostly big serves," said Muster, who has beaten the Australian both times they have played.

"Big servers mostly don't have a great baseline game. My baseline game is like his serve. It was a question, does he get more serves in or do I make more unforced errors?"

In the 79-minute match, Muster never presented Philippoussis with a break point opportunity. While made 31 unforced errors, Muster had only seven the whole day, and just one in the entire second set.

Davenport steamrolls Fernandez to reach final

INDIAN WELLS, California (AFP) — Lindsay Davenport steamrolled her onetime best friend and doubles partner Mary Joe Fernandez 6-1, 6-1 here Friday to reach the final of the Evert Cup tennis tournament.

Davenport, once so squeamish about taking on her friends in matches, showed no sign of remorse as she disposed of Fernandez in 52 minutes.

"She just played too well," Fernandez said. "She came out firing. She's such a big girl and hits the ball so hard that unless I can somehow dictate the rally I'm in big trouble.

"She served a pretty high percentage of first serves. When I served, even if I had a good first serve in, it came back harder. I was always on the defensive."

Davenport, the fourth seed, was delighted with her match, and confident of her chances in the final against sixth-seeded Romanian Irina Spirlea. Spirlea ousted top-seeded Spaniard Arantxa Sanchez Vicario on Thursday night.

"All week I've felt like I've been playing some of my best tennis in a really long time," she said. "If I'm playing my game and attacking, hopefully I can win my first big title on the Corel WTA Tour."

Even if she does win her first tier-one title, Davenport said she was sure her Olympic triumph in Atlanta would always stand out as her biggest victory.

Mary Joe Fernandez

The fact that she had to beat Fernandez to do it was just one of the things Davenport has had to get used to as she works her way up in world tennis.

"I think I've grown up a little bit in trying to overcome that, because it's always been a problem with me if I liked whoever I played," said the 20-year-old Californian, who turned pro in 1993.

Since ... the games, Fernandez and Davenport have fallen out over the ending of their doubles partnership. It was clear on Friday that Fernandez felt hard done by.

"We were good friends and we're not any more," Fernandez said.

"Basically, she went ahead and got another partner without telling me. I read about it in the paper the next day. She still hadn't told me."

Davenport seemed to think it was all a misunderstanding. Fernandez, only five years older than Davenport but an 11-year veteran of the women's tour, just seemed resigned.

"What can you do?" she said. "It's a competitive world, the tennis world. People look after themselves."

Michael Johnson wins AAU Award

ORLANDO (R) — Double Olympic gold medallist Michael Johnson was named recipient of the 1996 James E. Sullivan Memorial Award, the Amateur Athletic Union, (AAU) announced Friday.

Johnson received the honour, presented each year by the AAU to America's top amateur athlete, for his historic exploits at the Atlanta Olympics.

Johnson last summer became the first man to win gold medals in the 200 and 400 metres at the same Olympics, recording an astounding world record time of 19.32 seconds in the 200 meters.

"It is a great honour to receive the 1996 AAU Sullivan Award," Johnson said in a release issued by the AAU. "1996 was indeed a career year for me in winning two Olympic gold medals.

Johnson became the 37th track and field athlete to win the Sullivan Award, which completed a hat trick of such honours for the Dallas native. Johnson also received the Jesse Owens Award and was named the United States Olympic committee's man of the year for 1996.

The other finalists for the 67th Annual Sullivan Award were golf sensation Tiger Woods, who won his third U.S. Amateur crown before turning pro last year, Olympic 100 metres champion Gail Devers, figure skating world champion Michele Kwan, Olympic decathlon gold medallist Dan O'Brien, quadruple Olympic gold medal swimmer Amy Van Dyken, women's softball star Dot Richarson, women's basketball standout Teresa Edwards, gymnast Shannon Miller and star college quarterback Danny Wuerffel.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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♡ 1 0 4
♢ A 9 5 4
♣ 1 0 7 2

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♡ J 9 9
♢ Q 9
♣ Q 9 8 5 4 3

EAST
♠ Q 1 0 7 6 2
♡ 8 5
♢ K J 7 9
♣ A K

SOUTH
♠ K 5
♡ A K Q 7 3 2
♢ 1 0 3 2
♣ J 9

The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♠	2♡	Pass	4♡
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening lead: Eight of ♠

Ordinarily, a bridge player likes to be dealt as strong a hand as possible. But there can be a situation where one defender holds too much. Here's an example of what we mean.

South had little to spare for a two-level vulnerable overcall of one spade — make the hand any weaker and a preemptive jump would have been appropriate. Since the bid virtually promised a six-card suit, North's leap to game is justified.

West led a spade, covered by the nine and ten and won in the closed hand with the king. There appeared to be two losers in each minor, but there was a ray of hope for South. If East held a doubleton ace-king in clubs, as well as four diamonds headed by two honors, the defender could be trapped in an endplay after being squeezed.

Declarer played the hand in exemplary fashion. All six trumps were cashed, declarer discarding one spade, one diamond and two clubs from dummy. East could let go of two spades and a diamond in comfort, but had a problem with the last discard. As the cards lie, it may seem that East could afford to part with a high club, but that is an illusion. Declarer would then be able to endplay East in diamonds to avoid a second club loser. Try it.

At the table East elected to sluff another diamond, and the rest was easy. A low diamond was led and, when West produced the eight, the table's nine was inserted. East could win and cash two high clubs, but that was all for the defense. On the second club South carefully discarded dummy's jack of spades, won the spade return with the ace, then cashed the ace of diamonds. When both defenders followed, declarer's ten of diamonds became the fulfilling trick.

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CINEMA TEL:699238
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Al Jardal Walkankah
Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

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Baseball owners and players sign labour deal

NEW YORK (AFP) — Major League Baseball's five-year fight between club owners and players, a feud that tore apart the game's special place in American life, ended with the signing of a labour pact here Friday.

The labour squabble resulted in the cancellation of the 1994 World Series, the shortening of the 1995 season, a dramatic rift between owners of clubs with large and small revenues and bitter feelings on all sides.

Terms had already been agreed upon between the owners and the Major League Baseball players association, so the final signing was little more than a last chance to promote the peace won at such a dear price.

"Our fans are assured there will be labour peace in baseball for at least five years," acting commissioner Bud Selig said. "This marks the beginning of a true renaissance and golden era for the game.

"The attention, focus and energy of everyone in baseball, management and players alike, swing to the rebuilding of our national pastime."

What Selig neglected to mention was that the owners agreed to a compromise plan between their negotiator, Randy Levine, and union boss Don Fehr only after anti-union owners endured a betrayal by one of their own.

Chicago White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf, also the owner of the Chicago Bulls championship basketball team, organised a group of owners that was determined to battle the union through courts and lockouts if needed.

Reinsdorf preached tight spending amid fears that some clubs would face financial ruin under the new plan, then lured slugger Albert Belle away from Cleveland with a rich deal that made his team an instant title threat.

Within days, the boldout support faded and a deal was done. But the two billion-dollar business of baseball had been reduced by half as growing numbers of fans found other entertainment outlets.

"These have been most arduous negotiations," Fehr said. "But players are pleased to have finally concluded a new agreement. In my judgement, the agreements reached, along with the cooperation between players and clubs we contemplate, will play a major part in the explosion of popularity the sport is about to witness."

What Fehr did not say was that sponsors threatened to pull out bundreds of millions of dollars of advertising and financial supports, including television money, if the fight continued.

"This is a great day for baseball," Levine said. "For the next five years we can concentrate on the field without the distractions in the conference room."

The deal expires in 2001. If renewed without a labour fight, it would be the first baseball pact renewed without some sort of labour strife since the free agency era dawned and owners fought players for control of the sport.

Nets defeat Bulls 99-98

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey (R) — Xavier McDaniel hit four free throws in the final 16 seconds as the New Jersey Nets bung on for a 99-98 victory over the Chicago Bulls despite Micbael Jordan's 36 points.

Jordan also had eight rebounds and five assists for the league-leading Bulls (55-9), wbo split a four-game road trip to pick up two of their nine losses on the season. The Nets earned just their 19th win against 44 losses and beat Chicago for the first time in eight meetings.

Sam Cassell scored 28 points, all in the first three quarters, and Jimmy Jackson added 20 for New Jersey, which broke a three-game losing streak and won for the second time in its last eight games.

McDaniel and Kerry Kittles sparked a 9-2 run that broke a tie and gave the Nets a 95-88 lead with 3:38 to go, but Jordan hit a jumper. Steve Kerr nailed a three-pointer and Scottie Pippen made two free throws to tie it with 1:20 remaining.

Eacb team missed two shots and McDaniel went to the line with 16 seconds left, making both shots for a 97-95 lead.

Jordan missed badly on Chicago's next possession, McDaniel grabbed the rebound and sank two more from the line with 2.3 seconds left to seal it. Jordan sank a meaningless three-pointer at the buzzer.

"I didn't have my feet," Jordan said of his late miss. "I didn't have my rhythm. The last couple of games bave been dogfights, but we found ways to win. Tonight, we could never seize the game and our sbot selection was not great."

"There were too many Bulls fans here," McDaniel noted of the sellout crowd of 20,049. "It only bappens in New Jersey, but coach Calipari is trying to change that. We appreciate the fans that don't come to see Chicago."

McDaniel bad 11 points and nine rebounds in 24 minutes off the bencb.

In Atlanta, Sbawn Kemp scored half of his 26 points in the fourth quarter as the Seattle Supersonics beld off Steve Smith and the Atlanta Hawks, 97-91.

Seattle won for the sixth time in eight games while Atlanta had its five-game home winning streak stopped.

Gary Payton scored nine of his 20 points in the final period for Seattle. Smith, playing his 400th NBA game, scored 25 points in the quarter, nailing all seven of his three-pointers in the final 6:37.

In Indiana, Karl Malone scored 38 points and Antoine Carr added nine of his 15 in the fourth quarter as the Utah Jazz beat the Pacers 105-96 for their seventh win in eigbt games.

In Inglewood, Malik Sealy's puthack dunk with 7.3 seconds left lifted the Los Angeles Clippers to a 97-95 victory over their cross-town rivals, the Los Angeles Lakers. Rodney Rogers scored 21 points and Loy Vaught had 20 and 11 rebounds for tbe Clippers, who won for just the second time in eight games. Eddie Jones scored 22 and Kobe Bryant 16 for the Lakers, who have lost five of their last eight games.

In Milwaukee, Chris Webber scored 26 points and Gheorghe Muresan got 23 as the Washington Bullets beat the Bucks 105-96.

In Orlando, Brian Shaw, getting added playing time due to nick Anderson's knee injury, had 16 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds as the Magic beat the Charlone Hornets 86-81.

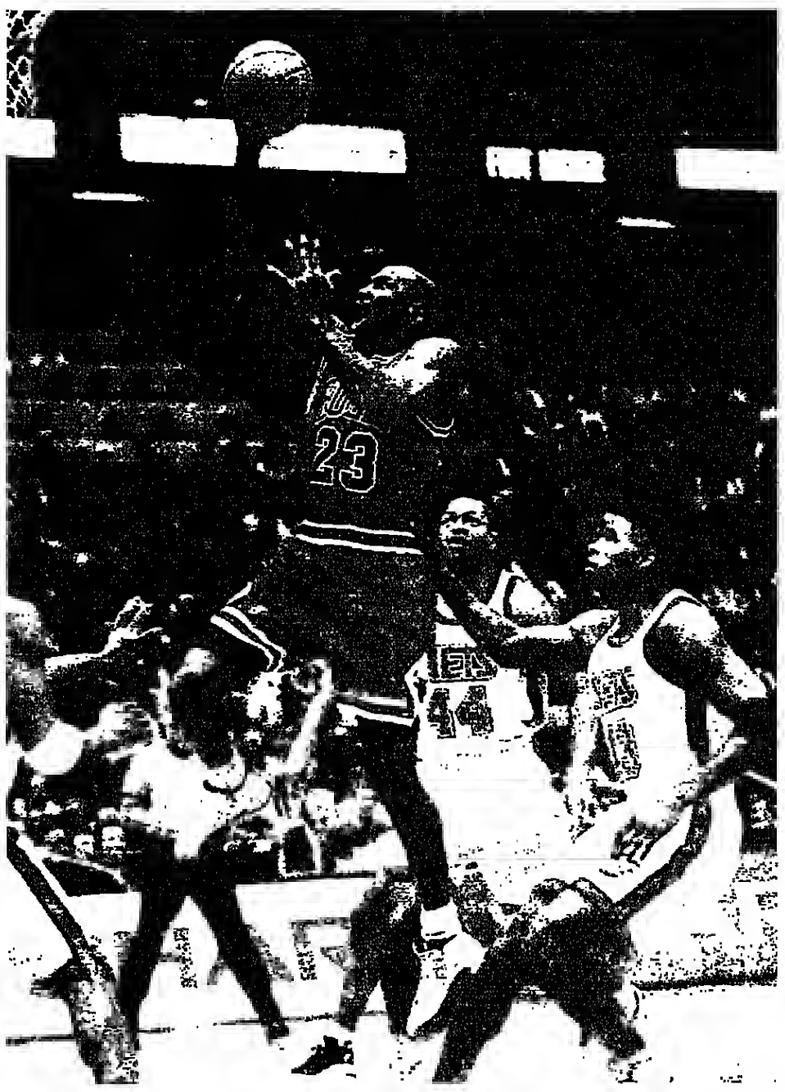
Penny Hardaway scored 27 points and Rony Seikaly added 21 and 12 rebounds for the Magic, who beat Charlotte for the eighth time in nine tries.

In Portland, Kenny Anderson scored 15 of his 20 points in the first half as the Trail Blazers raced to a 16-point lead en route to a 96-73 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

In San Antonio, Cory Alexander posted career highs with 22 points and 10 assists and added seven rebounds as the Spurs defeated the Boston Celtics 103-92.

In Philadelphia, Jerry Stackhouse had 26 points and a season-high nine assists. Allen Iverson added 24 points and Derrick Coleman scored 21 and grabbed 14 rebounds as the 76ers led all the way to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 109-95.

In Miami, Tim Hardaway had 19 points and 12 assists and Voshon Lenard added 17 points as the Heat held Vancouver scoreless over the final 2:36 and handed the Grizzlies their 12th straight loss, 88-82.



Chicago Bulls guard Michael Jordan (L) cuts through New Jersey Nets guard Kendall Gill (R) and forward Tony Massenburg (44) to drive to the hoop in the first period of their NBA game at the Meadowlands Arena in East Rutherford, New Jersey. New Jersey defeated Chicago 99-98 (Reuters photo)

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Haessler to stay at Karlsruhe

KARLSRUHE, Germany (AFP) — German international midfielder Thomas Haessler bas signed a new three-year contract with Karlsrube that will keep him at the German first division club until the year 2000. Playmaker Haessler, 30, arrived at Karlsruhe in 1994 from Roma and has captained the side to sixth place in the Bundesliga so far this season.

Barcelona in Cup semifinal

MADRID (R) — Barcelona will play Las Palmas in the semifinals of Spain's King's cup while Seville's Real Betis will take on Celta of Vigo. The draw made on Friday pitted Barcelona, wbo bave beaten both Real and Atletico Madrid on their way to the final four, against the only second division side left in the competition. The semifinals will be played over two legs.The winners of the King's Cup, Spain's Premier Cup competition, qualify for the European Cup Winners' Cup.

Graf returns at German Open

HAMBURG (R) — World No. 1 Steffi Graf, wbo bas been out of action for over a month with a knee injury, is set to make a return to the court at the end of April in the German Open, organisers said on Friday. The tournament may even provide an intriguing showdown with 16-year-old Martina Hingis of Switzerland who is due to take over the top spot held by Graf for a total of 377 weeks on Marcb 31. Graf, 27, bas not played since the semifinals of a tournament in Tokyo on February 1 and has hardly trained since then. Defending German Open champion Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, fellow Spaniard Conchita Martinez and Germany's Anke Huber will also take part in the tournament.

Jalabert nears 3rd Paris-Nice win

SISTERON, France (R) — Frenchman Laurent Jalabert moved close to a third straigbt Paris-Nice win by taking Friday's sixth stage over 180 kms from Montelimar. World No.1 Jalabert made the decisive move in the Ventoux mountain pass, halfway through the ride, when be escaped with Spaniards Santiago Blanco and Mikel Zarrabeita. Swiss Laurent Dufaux later joined them.

U.S. play Canada in qualifier

PALO ALTO, California (AFP) — Canada and the United States, both desperate for a World Cup qualifying round victory meet here on Sunday in a match crucial to their goal of reaching the 1998 finals in France.

The confederation of North American, Caribbean and central American football playoff will produce three qualifiers, with Mexico favoured and the U.S. knowing that failure would be a setback for U.S. soccer.

Canada opened with a 4-0 defeat to Mexico while the U.S. team returned from Jamaica with a goal-less draw that extended their winless streak to seven games — four lost and three drawn.

The U.S. team played one international match last year in part to help fledgling Major League Soccer (MLS) gain a U.S. foothold.

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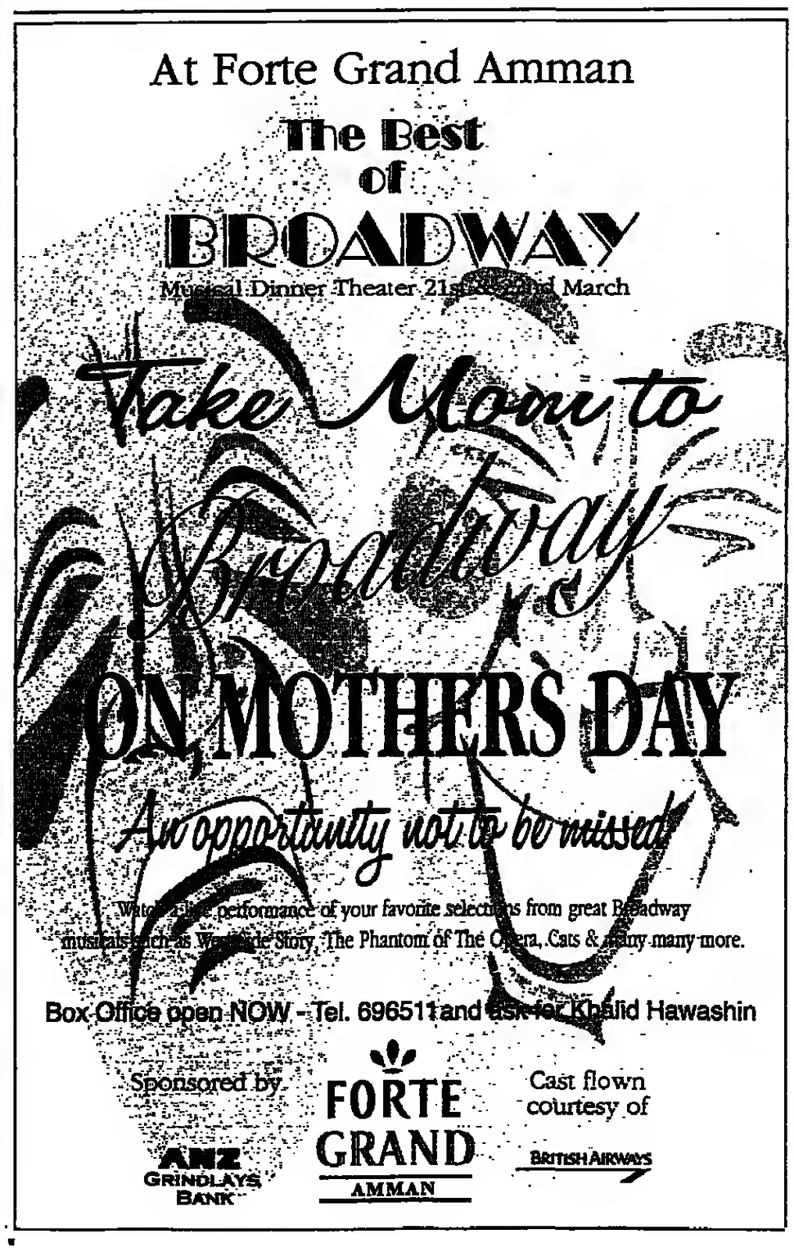

JOB OPPORTUNITY

A Project Management Unit (PMU) at the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities needs the following :

1- Engineer: The Engineer shall be responsible for (i) oversight of the detailed design and bid documents preparation for all project works and for the monitoring progress in their implementation, (ii) supervision of the tourism development feasibility studies in addition to technical evaluation of tourism-related projects, (iii) monitoring quality aspects for all project, (iv) environmental monitoring foe ensuring works planning, design and execution are implemented following sound environmental practices and monitoring contractors performance in this regard.

Necessary professional qualifications and skills shall include:

(i) A minimum of a master's degree in civil engineering and/or relevant professional field such as urban planning with strong engineering background and familiarity with project environmental analysis.

(ii) A minimum of 5-8 years' experience in infrastructure and/or urban project design and construction supervision. Experience in construction quality management is desirable.

2- System Analyst: The System Analyst shall be responsible for preparing and operating a project management information system, including writing manuals, using project management principles and software.

Necessary professional qualifications and skills shall include:

(i) Master's in computing science or related field.

(ii) A minimum of 3-5 years' experience in building information systems using industry standard methodologies such as Budget Accounting System or Cost Accounting System.

(iii) Demonstrated knowledge of Information System Management software packages.

3- Statistics Specialist: The Statistics Specialist shall be responsible for analysis of the existing tourism statistical database and designing appropriate surveys to develop the database.

Necessary professional qualifications and skills shall include:

(i) A minimum of a master's degree (PhD preferred) in statistics and/or other relevant professional fields such as econometric and applied economics.

(ii) A minimum of 3-5 years' experience in statistical analysis, designing surveys and maintaining statistical databases.

4- Procurement specialist: The Procurement Specialist shall be responsible for carrying out all the project procurement activities and responsible of preparing the needed procurement procedures and standardised documentation for efficient and timely project implementation.

Necessary professional qualifications and skills shall include:

(i) Master's in civil engineering and/or relevant professional field with string engineering background.

(ii) A minimum of 5-8 years' experience in procurement. Experience in procurement for World Bank funded projects would be desirable.

5- Accountant: The Accountant shall be responsible for carrying out all the project accounting and disbursement activities in close co-ordination with the relevant government agencies accounting units.

Necessary professional qualifications and skills shall include:

(i) Master's in business administration or other relevant professional fields.

(ii) A minimum of 5-8 years' experience in accounting and/or financial auditing. Experience in accounting/disbursement for World Bank-funded projects would be desirable but not essential.

All candidates should have the following:

(i) Demonstrated aptitude in word-processing, worksheet and computer database management.

(ii) Excellent communications skills in English.

(iii) Jordanian nationality.

(iv) Demonstrated ability to work effectively with management-level government personnel and multidisciplinary technical teams.

Kindly submit a copy of your CV in English to the Second Tourism Project Unit/World Bank at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities no later than 22nd March, 1997.

Al Quds Committee to meet March 27-28 on Israeli measures

RABAT (Agencies) — An Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) committee dealing with Jerusalem is to meet here in late March, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Saturday at the end of a brief visit to Morocco.

The committee is to meet on March 27 and 28, Mr. Mubarak told reporters after a meeting with King Hassan II.

The Moroccan king is the current chairman of the committee, which comprises Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, the Palestinian National Authority and 13 Arab or Islamic countries.

The committee meeting would be held at ministerial level and would follow an extraordinary OIC summit being held in Islamabad on March 23 and 24 to discuss recent Israeli moves in Jerusalem and other issues.

"After talks with His Majesty King Hassan, it was decided to convene Al Quds (Jerusalem) committee on March 27-28, 1997, to examine the latest developments related to the Holy City," Mr. Muharak told reporters at Rabat airport before flying to Cairo.

The 70-minute talks between the Egyptian and Moroccan heads of state "were also focused on the Middle East peace process and bilateral relations", Mr. Mubarak added but gave no other details.

The 15-member comminee was set up by an OIC summit in 1975 with the aim of preventing the city, holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews, being Judaised by Israel.

Israel said this week it was going ahead with plans to build a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, a move that has fuelled Palestinian anger.

Asked about a possibility of convening an Arab summit to discuss the crisis facing the peace process, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa told Reuters: "The idea of holding an Arab summit exists...but the priority for Arab and Muslim countries is Al Quds issue."

He said that Mr. Muharak's visit to the United States was "important and positive".

"We want that Washington, which is the main sponsor of the peace process, to continue to play the role of an independent and honest mediator," Mr. Musa said.

Mr. Mubarak, who arrived in Morocco from United States on Thursday, was the third Arab leader — after King Hussein and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat — to visit Morocco in the last four weeks.

Mr. Arafat said after a visit to Morocco late last month that he and king hassan had also agreed on the need to hold an urgent meeting of the Al Quds committee.

The comminee is made up of Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Niger, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Senegal, Iraq, Syria, Mauritania and the Palestinian National Authority.

King Hassan said Morocco had "no special position" to take with the committee over which it presided administratively. "They (the members) have full responsibility and represent sovereign states."

KING VISITS BAQOURA: His Majesty King Hussein, accompanied by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and His Royal Highness Prince Ali and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai as well as Mohammad Rasoul Keilani, who is heading investigations into Thursday's attack at Baqoura, on Saturday visits the site of the rampage (Petra photo)

Israel bars Baqoura visits from its side pending results of investigation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Israel has barred Israelis and tourists from entering the Baqoura area following Thursday's attack there, the Jerusalem Post reported.

The Post also said the Israeli students who came under the attack at the site, known to Israelis as Naharayim, were not supposed to be there.

The Post said Friday Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai had ordered the army and police to bar Israelis and tourists from entering the area Anaheim enclave until the investigation into the attack was completed.

Defence officials quoted by the paper said it was possible that Israel would ask to renegotiate the security arrangements at the site, but they added this would only be discussed following the inquiry.

The attack may "change the character" of access to the area, said the Post without elaboration.

"I demanded that there be a representative of the Israeli police on the investigation team, so that we know everything that happened here in a true and accurate way, and so we can draw the right conclusions and (take) steps if needed," Mr. Mordechai said Thursday.

The eight-graders from Beit Shemesh's Fierst School who came under attack on Thursday were not supposed to be at that site, which is in any case off-limits to school trips, Israeli Deputy Education Minister Moshe Peled said Thursday.

Mr. Peled, who is responsible for the ministry's handling of school trips, told Israel Radio that while he did not want to make any accusations as the matter was still under initial investigation, "schools or (other institutions) in the entire education ministry system are not permitted to enter the island at Naharayim at present," he said.

Mr. Peled said private individuals could go there, but schools are strictly forbidden from doing so.

"This school was supposed to be some place else completely — based on the route approved by the education ministry's school trip coordination unit, it was supposed to be on Mt. Arbel and at Kfar Hittim and not at Naharayim... Somebody took it upon themselves to change the route, and apparently this has happened other times."

Asked why the site was off-limits, Peled explained: "The education ministry requires an armed adult chaperone for each 15 pupils on such a trip.

"Since according to the peace agreements between Israel and Jordan, we cannot bring more than four weapons on to the island at Naharayim, the education ministry does not permit schools to go there, because this violates the criteria of our trips. There is a complete ban on going to the island at Naharayim."

According to regulations, trip route must be coordinated with special school trip coordination offices staffed by representatives of the Society for the Preservation of Nature and the ministry, who check safety and security requirements.

Education Minister Zevulun Hammer said although the ministry "has not yet checked into what was included in the permit," he understood one could not visit such sites without a permit.

Ministry of Health doctors assert allowance increase is not enough

AMMAN — The 60 per cent incentive increase on the basic salaries of doctors working at the Ministry of Health is inadequate and doctors insist on the principle of equality with other public sector physicians, Jordan Medical Association (JMA) President Bassem Dajani said Saturday.

Dr. Dajani said 60 per cent of doctors working at the Ministry of Health are not less qualified from others working in the public sector, whose total salaries including allowances in some cases might reach up to JD 3,000 per month, such as those working at the Jordan University Hospital.

"A professor doctor at Jordan University Hospital receives a salary for lecturing, for working at the hospital, for performing operations and for overtime and he/she can also rent a clinic at the same hospital and earn from it, making up to JD2,000-JD3,000 a month," said Dr. Dajani.

Other public sector doctors are those working at the Science and Technology University Hospital as well as the Jordanian Armed Forces.

"We demand that a remodelled unified allowances system be applied to all doctors working in the public sectors," Dr. Dajani said.

The increase for the Ministry of Health doctors, which was endorsed by a Royal Decree last weekend, increased the allowance from 30 per cent to 60 per cent of the basic salary. But doctors would like to remodel the whole allowance system and to have the incentive increase be calculated according to the total salary and not on the basic salary.

"The overtime spent by a doctor at the Ministry of Health hospitals is equal to one third of his regular hours. But his/her incentive allowances are less than what he/she would receive during the regular hours. If his/her basic salary is 100 but the actual salary is 300 he/she will only receive JD 60 and not JD 180," Dr. Dajani said.

For the past two years the JMA and other professional associations have been fighting the government to "correct the injustices" of a unified allowances law passed in 1988. The law took away some rights and reduced the income of doctors and other professionals, union activists say.

Incentives for public sector doctors are usually allocated from a pool of fees paid by financially able patients.

As negotiations on allowances are still taking place between different professional associations and a ministerial committee, the JMA's second stage of demand will be to increase the basic salaries in order to raise the retirement wages which are calculated according to the basic salary.

"Allowances should be based on the performance, professionalism and qualification of the doctor," Dr. Dajani said.

A meeting between the JMA and the ministerial committee scheduled to take place last Tuesday was cancelled because the Ministry of Administrative Development did not have the proposal ready. Both parties will meet this Tuesday, Dr. Dajani said.

Kabariti, Khasawneh hold talks with Armenian foreign minister

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Armenian Foreign Minister Alexander Arzumanian on Saturday discussed ways to enhance bilateral relations, focusing especially on economic issues.

They also discussed the latest developments in the Middle East and Jordan's efforts to keep the peace process on track.

Mr. Kabariti stressed Jordan's interest in enhancing relations with Armenia in all fields.

He explained Jordan's position towards reviving the peace process and the Kingdom's crucial role in maintaining stability in the Middle East.

The meeting was also attended by Kamal Nasser, minister of administrative development and acting minister of foreign affairs.

The Armenian minister, who arrived in Amman Saturday, praised relations between the two countries and expressed his country's support for Jordan's role in promoting peace in the Middle East.

He voiced opposition to Israel's settlement plans, which he described as a hindrance to peace in the region.

Mr. Arzumanian described the challenges facing Armenia as it struggles to develop its national economy and infrastructure. He also explained the latest developments in Azerbaijan's Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia's position concerning the conflict as well as other regional issues.

Alexander Arzumanian

Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh fought a bitter eight-year war against Azerbaijan over the enclave. A tense ceasefire has reigned since May 1994.

The Armenian minister thanked the Jordanian government for its decision to appoint an ambassador to Armenia and said that the Armenian government has decided to appoint its current ambassador to Uzbekistan as non-resident ambassador to Jordan. The ambassador will assume his post in the next few days.

Later on Saturday, Mr. Arzumanian was received by Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh during which he delivered a message from Armenian President Levon Ter Petrossian to His Majesty King Hussein expressing Armenia's appreciation for the Hashemite leadership and Jordan's important role in reaching peace in the region.

The message also covered issues concerning bilateral relations and means of promoting them further, particularly economic ties, as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

The last visit to Jordan by an Armenian minister was in February 1992.

A spokesman for the Armenian delegation said that being geographically close to the Arab World, Armenia regards enhancing relations with the countries of the area as one of its top priorities.

"We maintains close relations with other countries in the region, and we strives to further boost our relations with Jordan," said the spokesman.

Mr. Arzumanian arrived here following a visit to Syria and Lebanon. He is scheduled to leave for Cairo Sunday.

Yemen seeks death for secessionists

SANAA (AFP) — Yemen's public prosecutor on Saturday called for the death penalty against 15 former southern Yemeni leaders accused of high treason over their separatist rebellion in the 1994 civil war.

Mohammad Al Badri demanded that the maximum penalties be imposed on the 15, who are being tried in their absence for "having planned and launched the civil war and for their attempt at secession."

The highest penalty under Yemeni law is death. Mr. Badri made his demands before a Sanaa court trying the exiled southern Yemenis, including former Vice-President and Yemeni Socialist Party Secretary General Ali Salem Al Beid.

The 15, who have taken refuge in Britain and several Arab countries, face charges of violating the constitution and of high treason.

They are also accused of "mobilising part of the army for acts of rebellion and of using public funds to that end" and of seeking recourse from "outside parties to achieve separation."

Libya slams U.S. over extension of sanctions

TRIPOLI (Agencies) — Libya slammed the United States on Saturday for the extension of U.N. sanctions against Tripoli, saying the move was the result of pressure by Washington.

"American has once again clearly shown its defiance of the international community, as represented by regional and global organisations which have announced their support for Libya," the official JANA news agency said.

It called supporters of a lifting of the sanctions "to adopt positions which would ensure that their will is respected."

The U.N. Security Council on Friday maintained sanctions against Libya in connection with two attacks on civilian airliners.

Libya has been under U.N. sanctions for more than four years, including an air embargo and an arms embargo against the country.

The sanctions are aimed at pressuring Tripoli to hand over two suspects in the downing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 that caused 270 deaths, and to cooperate fully in the investigation into the downing of a French Uta jetliner over Niger in 1989 that killed 170.

The sanctions are reviewed every 120 days and Security Council President Zbigniew Wlosowicz of Poland said there had been no consensus among the members to relax the punishment.

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, said the embargo will stay "as long as necessary."

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has argued that his government has cooperated with the French and does not have the suspects identified in the Pan Am bombing.

The Organisation of African Unity and Arab League have stepped up pressure recently for a reexamination of the sanctions against Libya which they say hurt ordinary people.

They favour a trial of the two Lockerbie suspects in a third country chosen by the United Nations or in the Hague.

The Cairo-based Arab League also condemned the Security Council's renewal of sanctions.

"The Arab league deplores the Security Council resolution, which has not taken into consideration the positive developments in this affair," Arab League Deputy Secretary General Ahmad Ben Helli said.

France is now ready to try the Libyan suspects in the Uta disaster, French delegate Herve Ladsous told the closed-door council session.

He said the French investigation had ended and should lead to "a trial in absentia" of Libyan suspects.

Libyan secret service operatives are suspected in the mid-air explosion over Niger.

French Judge Jean-Louis Brugiere, leading the probe, had visited Libya in July and concluded that although Libyan authorities had not fully cooperated, they had nonetheless enabled "significant progress" to be made in the investigation and a trial in absentia of six Libyan suspects would take place in France. Mr.

Khartoum implicitly confirms losing Yei

KHARTOUM (Agencies) — Sudan's official spokesman said the government has lost contact with the army in Yei, a key junction town that rebel forces claim to have captured, the Sudan News Agency (SUNA) said Saturday.

Brigadier Tayeb Ibrahim Mohammad Khair did not make clear, however, if government forces had withdrawn from the town — on a road to the main southern town of Juba — or if rebel forces had disrupted communications.

Brig. Khair told the agency in an interview that the army had repulsed four offensives on Yei. Then he added: "Our forces had been in constant contact with the command, but in the past hours there has been no communication."

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) said on Thursday that it had seized Yei, but the government quickly denied that report. SPLA spokesman Yassir Arman said Friday in Asmara, Eritrea, that the rebels had taken about 1,000 government soldiers prisoner near the town.

SUNA quoted Brig. Khair as saying reports that the rebels captured quantities of arms and soldiers around Yei were "mere lies."

Yei is on a road leading from the Uganda border to Juba. It is 30 kilometres from the border and 130 kilometres from Juba, which is under control of the government.

The southern rebels, mostly Christians and members of tribal faiths, have been fighting since 1983 for greater autonomy or independence from the Arab north. An estimated 1.3 million people have died from the fighting and ensuing famines.

In the past three months, the rebels launched an offensive along the Eritrean border in eastern Sudan after forming an alliance with northern opposition groups. The fighting on the Ugandan border in the country's southwest began earlier this month.

Brig. Khair repeated accusations that Uganda is behind the fighting along its border, saying the scale of the weaponry involved was evidence. Uganda has denied its forces are involved and accused Sudan of support Ugandan rebels inside its borders.

Ugandan and Sudanese officials met earlier this week in Entebbe, Uganda, to try to settle their differences. They were brought together by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati.

Meanwhile, the state government in the capital Khartoum announced plans for a "one-million man march" on Sunday to denounce Ugandan aggression, the state-run Sudanese television reported Friday night.

A Sudanese minister was quoted as saying the United States was behind recent fighting in the south as it was "obsessed" with partitioning Sudan.

Mostafa Othman Ismail, minister of state at the Foreign Ministry, was quoted in the private newspaper Akhbar Al Youm on Saturday as saying that a rebel offensive in the east in January was a ruse to distract the Sudanese army from the southern offensive, which Khartoum has blamed on Ugandan troops.

"The U.S. administration is obsessed with dismembering Sudan and besieging the Islamic government using local and regional forces," Mr. Ismail said.

COLUMN

Marchioness enlists husband in fur campaign

ROME (R) — Posters showing a marchioness and her husband naked in bed were plastered across Italian billboards in a campaign to dissuade women from wearing fur and men from giving fur as presents. Marina Ripa di Meana and her husband Carlo are seen pitying the fur-wearing community while in a naked embrace under bedsheets. "Poor little things, they buy furs because they have no one to keep them warm," Marina is pictured saying. The campaign is being run by the Italian branch of animal activists' group the International Animal Welfare Fund (IFAW). Carlo, once a leader of Italy's Greens Party and a former European environment commissioner, said he decided to take part in the campaign to remind Italian men of their responsibility. "Too often it is the husbands, or the lovers, who give their partner a fur because they are incapable of giving true love, warmth and affection," he said in a statement.

Hong Kong democrats see dollars in postcards

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's Democratic party is looking to stock up its coffers by selling sets of postcards featuring cartoon drawings of its 19 legislators and party slogans, a local newspaper reported. The party will offer the postcards for sale in the United States and Canada for U.S. $12-13 a set next week, when party leader Martin Lee, whip Szeto Wah and member Andrew Cheng are due to visit, the Hong Kong Standard said. Two thousand sets of the postcards, illustrated by well-known Hong Kong political cartoonist Zhun Zi, have been printed, it said. They will be sold in Hong Kong in May.

Underwater juggling, red noses as comics aid Africa

LONDON (R) — Britain broke out in a rash of false red noses and bizarre behaviour as comedians and celebrities led a drive to raise millions for the poor and disadvantaged at home and in Africa. A scuba-diver planned to juggle underwater in a swimming pool in Chelmsford, southeast England, a London busdriver dressed as a woman for the day and a couple from Staffordshire, central England, planned to get married wearing red noses. Sales of red noses are a key money spinner for the comic relief charity, which has raised 112 million pounds ($180 million) for the poor in Britain and Africa since it began in 1986. One third of the money raised goes to British charities and the rest to projects in Africa.

FDA gives clearance to market AIDS drug

LA JOLLA, California (R) — Agouron Pharmaceuticals Inc. said Friday the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave it clearance to market its HIV protease inhibitor Viracept in the United States. Approval was given under the Fda's accelerated approval process, Agouron said. Stock of the La Jolla, California-based pharmaceutical maker rose $6 to $81.75 in afternoon trading on Nasdaq. Viracept is the first HIV protease inhibitor to be cleared for marketing simultaneously in formulations for adults and children. Agouron said it will be widely available at pharmacies throughout the United States next week.